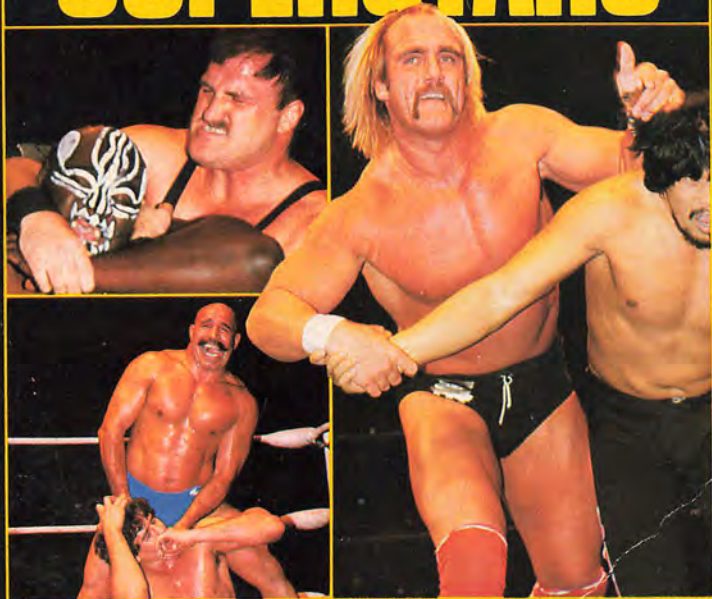


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WRESTLING SUPERSTARS



DANIEL AND SUSAN COHEN

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The Hottest Stars of Wrestling . . .

Hulk Hogan
"Rowdy" Roddy Piper
Bob Backlund
Paul "Mr. Wonderful" Orndorff
The Von Erichs
Ric Flair
Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka
The Road Warriors
Wendi Richter
Junkyard Dog
The Iron Sheik
Sergeant Slaughter
Andre the Giant

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WRESTLING SUPERSTARS

**DANIEL AND SUSAN
COHEN**



AN ARCHWAY PAPERBACK

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To Nick Monahan,
a real fan

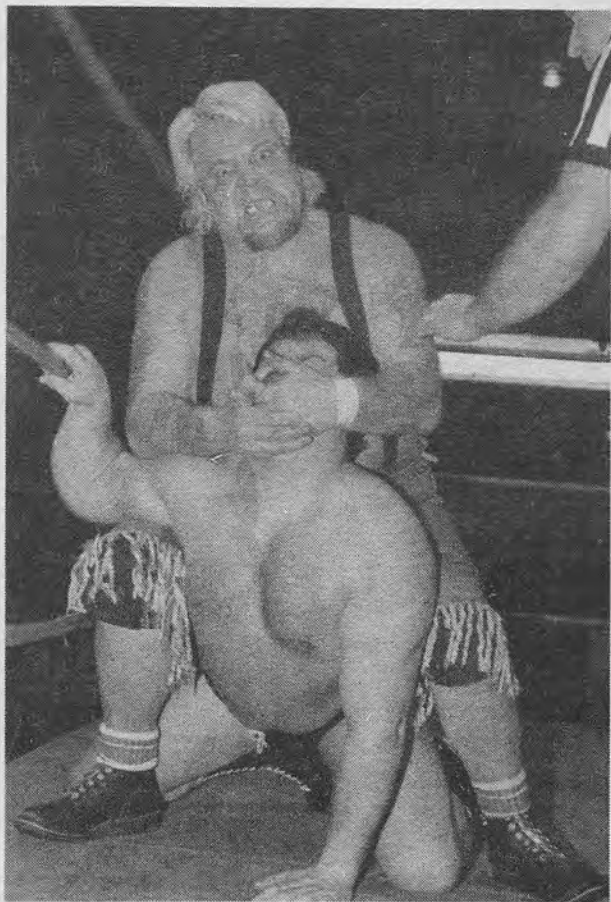
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**WRESTLING
SUPERSTARS**



Professional wrestling is a colorful and bizarre spectacle.

THE WRESTLING EXPLOSION

It's hot. It's chic. It's hip. It's now. It's the sports spectacle sensation of the '80s. What is it? Why, it's professional wrestling, of course.

If you haven't heard of Hulk Hogan or "Rowdy" Roddy Piper, then you've been living very deep in the woods indeed. Right now everybody from sophisticated New Yorkers to the good ol' boys down home are hooked on pro wrestling. It's a national mania.

Where did it come from?

The fact is that it didn't come from anywhere—it's been here all the time. Pro wrestling is as American as apple pie. Frank Gotch won the first recognized heavyweight championship by defeating George Hackenschmidt in Chicago in 1905. Back in the 1920s and '30s, guys with names like Ed "Strangler" Lewis and Man Mountain Dean were throwing one another around the squared

circle. Actually, no one ever really threw the 400-pound-plus Man Mountain very far, but you get the idea.

So wrestling, or "rassling" as old-timers call it, has always had fans. In the late 1940s and early '50s, wrestling suddenly got big—not as big as it is now—but big. The main reason was television. Early TV producers desperately needed shows, particularly shows that were cheap and easy to produce. All you had to do to televise a wrestling match was point the camera toward the ring—or occasionally outside the ring when one of the wrestlers got tossed over the ropes. It was a colorful sport even in black and white on a twelve-inch screen. People who had never seen a match before loved it. The exotic Gorgeous George became a major celebrity.

As network television grew stronger, wrestling faded from the tube. A few local stations kept on televising matches, but as far as the great mass of the TV-watching public—and that's most of us—was concerned, wrestling had disappeared. However, it had only disappeared from television. Wrestling was going on in auditoriums and high-school gyms all over the country. Like gypsies the wrestlers traveled from town to town, and a good card would pack the stands with screaming fans in Scranton, Atlanta, Minneapolis or Portland.

Without television, wrestling is a regional sport. Each region has its own promoters, its own



Gorgeous George, a wrestling superstar of early television

favorites, its own champs. A wrestler who is well known to Texas fans might be almost completely unknown to fans in the Northeast. Some wrestlers stay in one region. Others move around a lot. There are magazines that keep the fans informed about what is going on in different parts of the country, but reading about a match just isn't the same as seeing it.

Now wrestling is back and it's bigger than ever. There are lots of reasons for the wrestling explosion of the '80s, but television plays a very important role again. During the '80s, many new channels opened up because of the growth of cable TV. Like television in the early days, these new channels were starved for shows. Just as it had in the late '40s and early '50s, wrestling filled the need. That gave a whole new generation a chance to discover wrestling and like their parents, they loved it—you loved it. Pretty soon pro wrestling was the most popular program on many cable channels. Slowly, the networks are catching on.

It isn't just the matches that people like to watch, either. The interviews and other out-of-the-ring activities attract huge audiences. While there's nothing quite like a pro wrestling match, there's nothing remotely like a pro wrestling interview. The big guys shout, threaten, brag, bellow, roar, tear off their shirts and more. They're not diplomats. "I'm gonna tear chunks out of his face" is a fairly typical comment.

The Wrestling Explosion

According to one wrestler, anyone under 230 pounds is a "pencil-necked geek." Paul "the Butcher" Vachon was married on television. During the ceremony, one of the guests, another wrestler, George "the Animal" Steele, ate the flowers.

Wrestling is not just a series of matches. It's a continuing drama. There are long-running feuds, startling character changes, and occasional complete changes of identity. Old characters drop out, new ones appear, and old ones reappear in different guises. Something is always going on.

Wrestling has also benefited hugely from its connection with rock music. Actually, wrestling, which has been called a "heavy-metal sport," is a lot like rock music. In rock and wrestling, the stars with their strange names and wild get-ups are colorful, larger-than-life figures. A Twisted Sister concert generates the same sort of excitement as a pro wrestling match.

The key figure in the rock-wrestling connection is Cyndi Lauper. Former wrestler and current wrestling manager "Captain" Lou Albano appeared in a couple of her videos. Then Lou began claiming that he had really written Cyndi's songs, and lots of other things. So Cyndi got mad and began managing a woman wrestler, Wendi Richter, who beat Albano's long-time woman's wrestling champ, the Fabulous Moolah. The whole thing wound up on MTV.

Later, "Rowdy" Roddy Piper smashed one of



The rock-wrestling connection. Cyndi Lauper watches while Wendi Richter tosses the Fabulous Moolah, managed by Capt. Lou Albano.

Cyndi's platinum records over Captain Lou's head and knocked Cyndi's own manager Dave Wolf out cold. Roddy and a bunch of wrestling's bad guys began loudly running down rock. Cyndi had her supporters in the wrestling fraternity, including the biggest of them all, champ Hulk Hogan. Captain Lou had a change of heart and haircut and began managing good guys like Barry Windham and Mike Rotundo. There were all sorts of threats, challenges and grudge matches. The end is not yet in sight. But that's the way it

has always been in pro wrestling. As we said, it's a continuing drama.

The wrestling world is divided more or less evenly into good guys and bad guys. The good guys are called scientific wrestlers or sometimes "babyfaces." The bad guys are called rule breakers and are said to have an "attitude problem." That's a polite way of saying that they are mean, nasty and fight dirty. Often a wrestler will undergo a change of personality. For a long time, Sergeant Slaughter was hated for his viciousness. Now he's one of wrestling's most popular figures. Paul "Mr. Wonderful" Orndorff was once a clean wrestler; then he became an egotistical and obnoxious rule breaker. In recent months he has become a good guy again. Sometimes wrestlers completely change identities. Ken Patera briefly put on Arab robes and began calling himself the "Sheik." For a while, Dusty Rhodes put on a mask and called himself "Midnight Rider."

Oh yes, the rules. There are rules in professional wrestling, but the rule breakers don't just break them, they completely ignore them. There's a referee in the ring, too, but he's usually about half the size of the wrestlers and doesn't seem very anxious to do anything that would make the big guys too angry. Referees often don't appear to be paying much attention to what is happening in the ring.

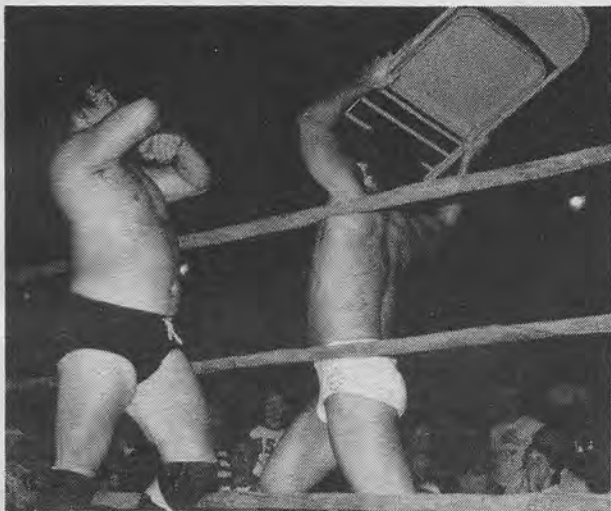
In a recent wrestling extravaganza at Madison Square Garden in New York City, the Iron Sheik

won a match by grabbing his manager's cane and knocking opponent Barry Windham out cold with it. The referee may have been the only one of the thousands in Madison Square Garden or of the millions who watched on closed-circuit television who didn't see this flagrantly illegal maneuver, and the Iron Sheik was declared the winner.

Rule breakers regularly engage in choking, eye gouging, hair pulling and biting. They conceal a variety of foreign objects in their tights, and use them. One wrestler routinely carries a packet of salt to throw in his opponent's eyes. Wrestlers wear armored arm pads, weighted gloves or heavy boots during a match. Sometimes they get disqualified, but that doesn't happen a whole lot.

The fighting goes on inside and outside the ring. Wrestlers frequently attack one another with ringside chairs. Managers, who can be more vicious than the wrestlers themselves, not only shout advice, they help in more physical ways—for example, by holding an opponent while their guy beats him up. Wrestlers who are not involved in a match may suddenly show up and jump in the ring to help a friend or smash a hated enemy. Referees have been pinned, and 300-pound bodies have been dumped on top of the announcers. In a professional wrestling match, anything can happen and it usually does. It's the wildest, craziest spectacle in the world.

Is it real or fake?



Wrestlers often assault one another with ringside chairs.

No one doubts that pro wrestlers are great athletes. Many are former Olympians, football players or weightlifters.

When Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka jumps off the top rope and lands on an opponent halfway across the ring, that's real. When 474-pound Andre the Giant picks up 380-pound Big John Studd and body slams him to the canvas, that's real, too.

Wrestling's top promoter, Vince McMahon, Jr., head of the World Wrestling Federation, told a *Los Angeles Times* interviewer, "It doesn't

really matter to me whether someone believes it's real or fake. It matters that they enjoy what we do, the performance inside and outside the ring."

We do enjoy it—and that's the main reason for the wrestling explosion. So call it sport, show biz or a wild, exciting, weird and wacky combination of the two, it's pure spectacle and nonstop excitement.

And now let's meet the wrestlers you love, and the wrestlers you love to hate.

THE GOOD GUYS

HULK HOGAN

If one man can be said to be responsible for the current wrestling explosion, he's Hulk Hogan. The six-foot-eight-inch, 325-pound former Venice, California, beach boy is more than the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) heavyweight champ, he's a national—no, an international—celebrity.

The Hulkster has appeared in films, most notably as Thunderlips (the guy who tossed Sylvester Stallone around in *Rocky III*). He's appeared frequently on television as a guest. He took a spot as an MTV guest VJ, and even co-hosted the popular show *Saturday Night Live*.

When the fans hear the opening strains of his theme song, "Eye of the Tiger," they begin to cheer. And when Hulk explodes down the aisle, climbs into the ring, and rips—literally rips—his

"American Made" T-shirt from his body and throws it to the audience, they go crazy.

Even those who are not wrestling fans are affected by the big man's presence. It's not just his size, since there are bigger wrestlers. Hulk Hogan has something else. It's that indefinable quality known as charisma.

The Hulk might be called one of the new breed of wrestlers, since he hasn't really been part of the wrestling scene that long. Despite his immense size, and the fact that he had obviously spent a lot of time in the gym, Hulk Hogan was not one of those who had always dreamed of being a professional wrestler. He didn't wrestle or play football in college; he played music. He was a music major who dreamed of being a pop music star.

While attending college in Florida he also played in some of the night spots on the Tampa strip. He was spotted there by a couple of pro wrestlers—Jack and Jerry Brisco. They immediately realized his potential. Hulk took a lot of persuading. He was still intent on becoming a music star. Finally, he gave up his dream of music for pro wrestling, but he never lost his musical interests. In 1984, Hulk became one of the key figures in the immensely successful rock-wrestling connection.

New fans—particularly those who have been attracted to wrestling by the Hulkster—don't remember how he started. They know him only



The Hulkster greets new friend Paul "Mr. Wonderful" Orndorff.

as the ever-victorious defender of rock and the U.S.A. and destroyer of the notorious, America-hating, music-hating Iron Sheik. Long-time fans, however, recall that when the Hulkster first entered the wrestling world it was as a villain under the guidance of "Classy" Fred Blassie, wrestling's number-one manager of bad guys. And for a while Hulk did it Blassie's way—which is dirty. He was getting good matches, but he never got what Blassie promised him, a shot at the title.

After the filming of *Rocky III*, the Hulkster returned to wrestling, but without Fred Blassie. He was a new wrestler, not precisely scientific, but certainly not the arrogant rule breaker he had been before. And he was a major celebrity.

Then things moved quickly. The Iron Sheik won Bob Backlund's long-held title, and a few weeks after that, on January 23, 1984, Hulk Hogan won the WWF championship from the hated Sheik, who was managed, incidentally, by Hulk's former friend and mentor, Fred Blassie.

Hulk Hogan has become the most famous wrestler of the '80s, probably the most famous wrestler of all time. No one doubts his skill and his enormous strength. But he also has his detractors, particularly among long-time wrestling fans. They say he's not fast and agile enough, that he poses more than he wrestles. They grumble that he has moved up the wrestling ladder too quickly, that he hasn't taken his lumps in gyms and auditoriums all over the country like other wrestlers. Most of all, they complain that he doesn't wrestle often enough, and that he doesn't meet the right opponents. A true champ, say his detractors, would wrestle all comers while the promoters will never allow Hogan to wrestle anyone who might possibly beat him because he's such a big drawing card.

Dan Shocket, a columnist for *Inside Wrestling* who is something of a spokesman for the villains of wrestling, even accuses the Hulk of betraying

good old Freddy Blassie just to win approval of his fans.

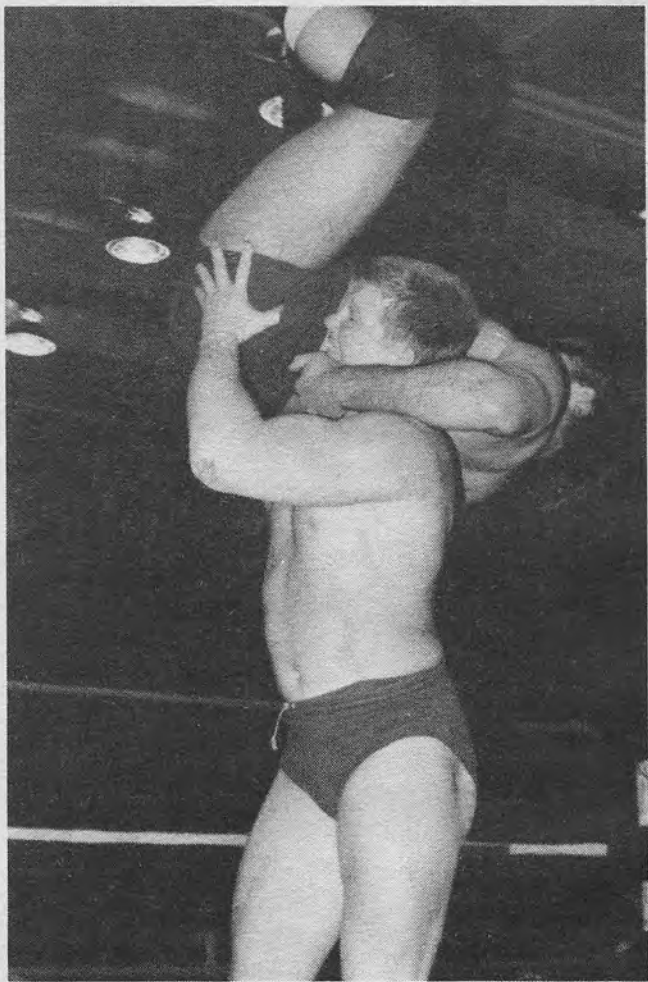
The complaints, however, do not affect the Hulkster's growing legion of fans. What they worry about is Hogan's popularity beyond the squared circle. Will the attractions of movies and television lure the champ away from his wrestling career? That is a distinct possibility, though you can bet that the WWF will do everything it possibly can to keep the incredibly popular Hulk Hogan in the wrestling world for as long as possible.

BOB BACKLUND

He looks like the all-American boy. He *is* the all-American boy. He doesn't break the rules or threaten to stomp someone else to a pulp. He's all "gosh" and "gee whiz." He's a family man who has spent a lot of time helping young athletes.

Yet for five years, Bob Backlund reigned supreme as champion of the World Wrestling Federation. He took on all comers from the meanest (like Greg Valentine) to the biggest (like Big John Studd). And he beat them all. Quite a feat for a basically nice guy.

Backlund is a born wrestler. He wrestled in high school in his native Minnesota and was a four-time All-American in college wrestling, winning the prestigious NCAA championship. A few



Bob Backlund in action

years later he turned professional, and quickly began to dominate the pro ranks the way he had once dominated the college scene.

On February 20, 1978, just a few years after entering pro wrestling, Backlund defeated "Superstar" Billy Graham for the World Wrestling Federation championship in Madison Square Garden.

There was nothing exotic or bizarre about the new champ. No makeup, no fancy tights or colorful robes. Any devotee of college and Olympic wrestling would recognize many of the moves in Backlund's style. Pro wrestlers have a lot more leeway than the amateurs, and Backlund had added an impressive array of aerial acrobatics to his fighting arsenal. His atomic knee drop became one of the most feared maneuvers in wrestling. Once an opponent was subjected to that, it usually spelled the end, and another Backlund victory.

There are no tag-team matches in amateur wrestling, but Backlund and his friend Pedro Morales held the WWF tag-team championship in 1980. There are no steel-cage matches in the amateurs, either, and Backlund recalled that one of his most memorable moments came in a cage match with Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka. Snuka climbed fifteen feet up to the top of the cage and performed his famous Superfly leap. Backlund managed to get out of the way just in time. It was a very close call.

There is another moment that will be burned in Bob Backlund's memory forever. It came on December 18, 1983, when the champ was wrestling the challenger the Iron Sheik. The Sheik caught Backlund in his lethal camel clutch. Although that is normally a submission hold, Backlund refused to submit. However, his long-time manager threw in the towel, and to the surprise and shock of the Madison Square Garden crowd the hated Iron Sheik had dethroned all-American nice guy Bob Backlund.

Backlund expected a return match, but the Sheik's first defense was against relative newcomer Hulk Hogan, and the Hulkster won. A match between Hogan and Backlund seemed like a natural. It never happened. There were ugly rumors; Backlund was no longer in condition to wrestle; the WWF wanted to get rid of Backlund and replace him with the more colorful and charismatic Hogan.

There is a lot of bluff and bluster in wrestling. Not this time. Backlund was genuinely hurt and angry about the way he had been treated. He felt that he was being forced out of the sport he loved. He thought of retiring. Then the newly formed organization Pro Wrestling USA asked Backlund if he would wrestle with them. He agreed almost instantly.

After months of inactivity and depression, Bob Backlund was back doing what he loved best. Will Backlund ever meet Hogan for the WWF

championship? Given the bitterness all around, plus the fierce commercial rivalry between the WWF and Pro Wrestling USA, that seems doubtful. But as we've said, wrestling is a strange and crazy business—so you never know.

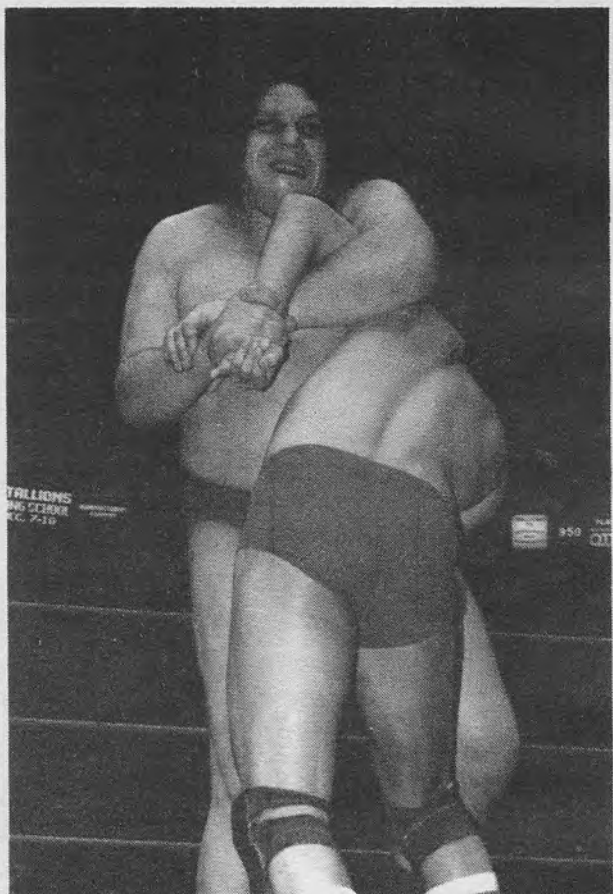
In the meantime it's good to have one of the sport's most skilled warriors and nicest guys back in action.

ANDRE THE GIANT

He is introduced as "the eighth wonder of the world." At a height of seven feet four inches and weighing nearly 500 pounds, the aptly named Andre the Giant is probably the biggest wrestler in the world. The French-born Andre is certainly the best known worldwide.

Andre's position in wrestling is unique. Since he started in 1970 he has traveled the world eleven out of twelve months of every year. Even he cannot remember how many matches he has wrestled. His opponents read like a wrestling hall of fame. There is one thing he does remember, however. He has never lost a one-on-one match. There have been draws and disqualifications—but never an outright loss. Andre has never been pinned and he has never submitted. No wrestler anywhere can ever boast of such a record.

And yet Andre has never been champion of anything and probably never will be. The usual reason given is that Andre travels so much that he



Andre the Giant

does not have time to keep up a regional ranking anywhere. The reasoning is nonsense. Everyone knows where Andre ranks. The real reason is that no promoter is going to put his champion up against the "Giant" who has never lost.

Andre appears to have no desire to wrestle in a championship match. He would much rather travel around the world wrestling whom he wants, where he wants. "I don't need a title to make money," says Andre. "Every wrestler wants to beat Andre. Nobody has done this yet."

Andre regards himself as a "goodwill ambassador of wrestling."

Not only has Andre beaten practically every other wrestler, he has been in practically every kind of wrestling match that modern pro wrestling has to offer. There are, of course, the singles competitions, and the standard tag-team matches. He has also been in tag-team matches with three or four wrestlers on each side. He has wrestled several opponents at once. There have been steel-cage matches, and Andre's favorites, the battle royals.

If Andre is an undefeated solo wrestler, he is also the undisputed king of the battle royals. In a battle royal a bunch of wrestlers get in the ring and fight each other. The one left standing in the ring at the end is invariably Andre the Giant.

Although Andre is generally popular with people in wrestling, there has been some grumbling about his reputation. Former champ Lou Thesz,

who likes Andre and thinks he is good for wrestling, admits that it isn't really fair to put the Giant in the ring with men of normal size—even normal wrestling size.

Former champs Gene Kiniski and Johnny Valentine, who don't like Andre very much at all, express their objections more strongly. They say that Andre really isn't a wrestler. Valentine calls him "a mountain with legs" and says, "A wrestler has to have the moves. All he has is size. That's not a wrestler, that's a sideshow attraction."

Kiniski adds, "As far as ability goes, he really doesn't need any, and conveniently, he doesn't have any, either."

Watching Andre in the ring is a bit like watching a film in slow motion. But the wonder is not that a man of his size moves quickly, but that he moves at all.

There have also been complaints that Andre has become more interested in being a celebrity than a wrestler, that in recent years he hasn't trained properly, that he's put on weight, and most of all that the Giant is just getting too old to be effective in the ring anymore. He has had a few close calls in recent years. For example, he was body slammed by Hulk Hogan. Body slamming the Giant would have been unthinkable not too long ago. The general consensus among wrestling folk is that if Andre stays active in wrestling, one day his incredible winning streak will be ended. But when that happens he will still

have established a record that will never be surpassed.

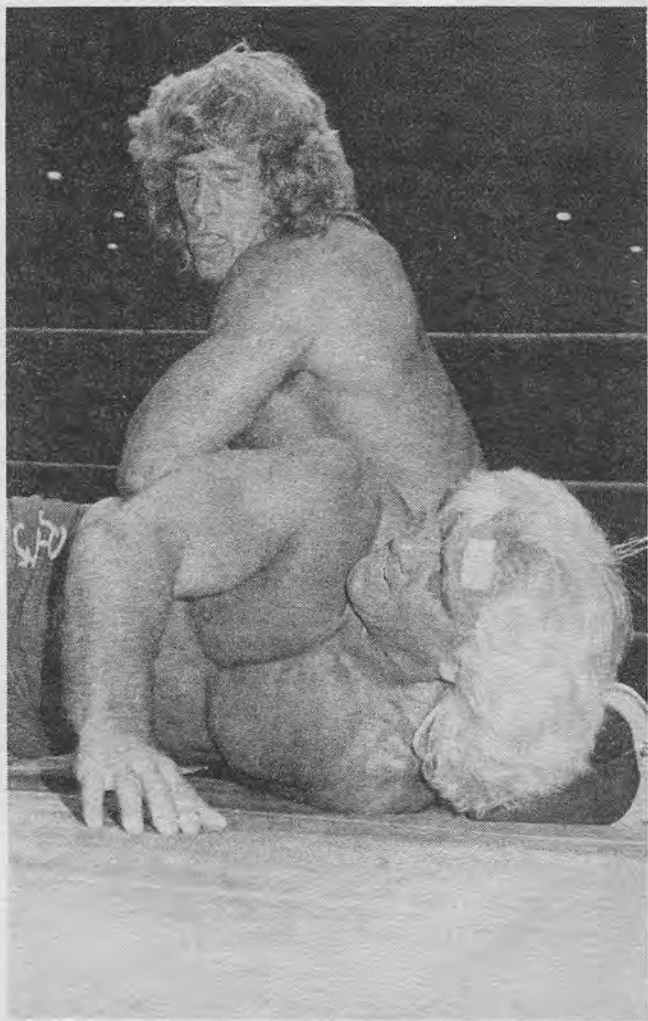
THE VON ERICHS

Wrestling is often a family tradition, with son succeeding father, brother wrestling side by side with brother. The Von Erich family of Texas is a prime example of this. It is the royal family of Texas wrestling, and when you consider all the great wrestlers that have come out of the Lone Star State that's saying a great deal.

The dynasty started with the great Fritz Von Erich, former American Wrestling Association champion and master of the feared claw hold. It seemed almost inevitable that his athletic sons would follow in his footsteps. Four of the five boys already have, and the youngest may yet enter the "family business." The boys had occasionally traveled with Fritz on some of his world tours, and they had gotten a taste of the glory that professional wrestling can bring.

The first of the Von Erich sons to enter the wrestling wars was eldest-brother Kevin. Kevin's career got off to a slow start, and a serious knee injury forced him into inactivity just when he really seemed to be on the rise.

Davic Von Erich was the next to join the pro ranks, and he did get off to a fast start. By the time Kevin was ready to resume full-time activity



Kerry Von Erich wrestles his family's longtime foe Ric Flair.

he had been eclipsed by his younger brother. In 1979, Kerry Von Erich began his career.

The Von Erichs are all lightly built for professional wrestlers, and Kerry was the first of them to go into serious bodybuilding. When a panel of experts was asked in 1984 to pick the dozen best physical specimens active in wrestling, Kerry Von Erich was right up there. The experts criticized him for having developed his body for a sculptured appearance, which was not necessarily the best for wrestling. But the panel concluded that Kerry's only real faults were those of youth, and that he seemed to have a bright wrestling future. Kevin Von Erich was also on the top list, not so much because he had done a lot of weight training, but because he was probably the best natural athlete on the list. According to the panel, it was determined that he had done the least work to alter his natural appearance.

David Von Erich, who many had once believed to be the most promising wrestler of the three, was not on the list for a very tragic reason. On February 10, 1984, David died suddenly and unexpectedly of an acute intestinal infection while wrestling in Japan. It was a shock from which the family has never really recovered.

All three brothers had actively pursued Ric Flair's championship title. Kevin actually pinned Flair in a championship match in Dallas. He thought he had won the belt, but then, in a bizarre turn of events and interpretation of the rules, the

sort of thing that can only happen in professional wrestling, the belt was given back to Flair. It seems that at some point Flair was disqualified. Then the referee got knocked out before he could announce the disqualification. Another referee rushed to the ring just in time to see Von Erich pin Flair. Kevin was declared the winner by the second referee. His fans went wild. But by this time the original referee had regained consciousness and announced that Flair was disqualified. Since you can't lose a championship on a disqualification, Flair was given the belt again. Does that all make sense to you? No? Well, don't worry about it. The fact to remember is that Kevin didn't win the championship.

Kerry actually did win the championship from Flair on May 6, 1984, before a hometown crowd of 44,000. Eighteen days later the same pair met in Japan. This time Flair came out on top.

Young Mike Von Erich has just entered the wrestling wars, and observers have already tapped him for future greatness. He was voted rookie of the year in 1984.

Although the Von Erichs do travel, the main complaint against them, particularly against Kevin, is that they spend too much time in Texas, where they are idolized. It's said that they are limiting themselves by not spending more time on the road meeting wrestlers from all over the country. Constant traveling, say the critics, is the only way to be a real champion.

Kevin is unconcerned. He's happy in his home state. "I plan to stay here in Texas for a while to come. There's loads of time for me to go out on the road. Right now, I just want to stay home."

RICK MARTEL

The word on Rick Martel is that he's a nice guy. A lot of people wondered if he was too nice to succeed in the brutal world of pro wrestling. Rick answered that question in May 1984, when he won the American Wrestling Association championship. And he's managed to retain it, turning back all challengers. Rick is regularly rated one of the top two or three pro wrestlers in the country. And he's done it without the dirty tricks and the bluster.

Verne Gagne, one of wrestling's all-time greats and now a wrestling promoter, has said, "Wrestling today seems to be under the influence of those who can yell the loudest, tell the most lies, spark the most brutality, or put the most paint on their face."

"Rick Martel is tremendously refreshing because he doesn't resort to gimmicks and behind-the-back tricks. He is straightforward, honest and lives or dies by his ability to wrestle. And make no mistake about it, this young man has what it takes to be one of the greats in wrestling."



Rick Martel

So Rick Martel has trod the wrestling straight and narrow. But it did not necessarily have to be that way. Pacific Northwest fans recall that when Rick started out, he teamed up successfully with another young wrestler, a brash newcomer from Scotland named Roddy Piper, who wasn't quite so rowdy in those days. Piper let his ego get the best of him and has gone on to be a very successful television personality, but a somewhat less successful wrestler. Martel's success has all come in the ring. Unlike other wrestlers, even the good guys, Martel is modest and soft-spoken in interviews.

Rick was born in Quebec, Canada, and his origins are discernible in his French-Canadian accent, which makes him sound more like a hockey player than a wrestler. He came from a wrestling family, his brothers Pierre and Maurice were involved in the sport before Rick became interested. With his brothers' encouragement, Rick turned professional at the relatively tender age of eighteen. Since that time he's toured the world.

Martel has proved himself able to wrestle anyone in any style. But his own personal favorite matches are those which are not necessarily the brawl types of crowd pleasers. He had a series of classic matches with former U.S. Olympic wrestler Brad Rheingans. They were matches filled with takedowns and escapes, the kinds of moves that purists love but which leave the

novice fan wondering what's going on and when the action will start.

"I enjoy matches like that," says Martel. "In many ways they are more demanding than getting into a back-alley fight. To retain the championship against someone like Rheingans proves to me that I deserve to be where I am."

There is no doubt that Rick Martel is one of the best "pure" wrestlers around. In the ring he can stand up to anyone. But can a wrestler who does not look or act bizarre continue to prosper in the increasingly colorful and glitzy world of pro wrestling today? After all, more people have heard of Rowdy Roddy than of Rick. And Rick is by far the better man in the ring.

Martel says, "We each must do what we feel is best for ourselves."

So far that philosophy has paid off for him.

JIMMY "SUPERFLY" SNUKA

The career of Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka is full of surprises. Today he is one of the most popular wrestlers around. New fans of wrestling see him only as one of the really good guys. But long-time fans remember him when he was managed by Captain Lou Albano. Snuka had adopted Albano's mean, rule-breaking style with a vengeance. (That was Albano's style until his recent change of heart, but let's not get sidetracked.)



Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka

Albano brought Snuka into the World Wrestling Federation late in 1981. However, what even some older fans—particularly those in the Northeast—don't realize is that Snuka had been wrestling professionally for ten years before that.

Long before he and Albano teamed up and moved to the WWF, Snuka was a major star in the Pacific Northwest, Hawaii, Texas, Georgia, even Japan. He had collected an impressive number of titles including a 1977 National Wrestling Alliance tag-team title with Paul Orndorff as his partner.

Under Albano's guidance, Snuka moved from regional star to superstar. The Albano-influenced Snuka wore his hair in a bushy mop, had a mustache and snarled a lot. He looked mean, and he was mean. Some of the wrestling magazines began running articles saying that Jimmy Snuka should be banned from wrestling because he was too mean. Such articles are not really serious. Practically no one is ever banned from wrestling. (They are certainly not banned for being too mean.) But such articles are an expression of some fans' discomfort and dismay about a wrestler's style.

Then Snuka and Albano had a bitter argument during a TV interview and they split apart. That was headline news in the wrestling world. They split over style; Snuka got tired of being hated. And they split over money; there were rumors

that Albano was stealing from Snuka. Jimmy denies those rumors.

In an interview with *Wrestling 84*, he put it this way:

“You see, for him to steal money from me would mean that I would have to have it in the first place for him to steal it. The problem with Albano was that I wasn’t even getting it in the first place, you see?”

With his new manager and old friend Buddy Rogers, Snuka changed his path. Now, instead of the fans talking about banning Snuka, they regularly vote him one of the most popular wrestlers around.

Jimmy Snuka really did come from the Fiji Islands. He had been an amateur wrestler and weightlifter and once held the Mr. Fiji Islander title.

Although he is extremely strong, it isn’t Snuka’s strength that makes him such an effective wrestler, it’s his agility. His nickname “Superfly” came from his spectacular finishing maneuver, the flying body press, now called the Superfly leap. Snuka climbs up to the top rope and jumps halfway across the ring onto his opponent, thus pinning him.

Snuka has sometimes been compared to the great Antonino Rocca, who brought the high-flying style of wrestling to America and who also popularized barefoot wrestling. Snuka says that

his style is really more like that of Mexican star Mil Mascaras, "But it's an honor to be compared to Rocca."

Although Snuka has given up the evil ways he learned under Captain Lou, he is still known to be a man with a violent temper. He often loses his temper in matches.

Recently, Snuka has lost his temper most often with Roddy Piper. It started with a celebrated and notorious interview aired on the *Piper's Pit* television show in which Snuka was insulted and attacked by the "Rowdy" one. There was a series of grudge matches—during one of them Snuka's neck was seriously injured when Piper hit him with a chair. While Snuka was on the mend, the feud was taken up by his eighteen-year-old nephew, the Tonga Kid, who seems well on his way toward developing into a first-rate wrestler in his own right.

There were dire rumors that the injury would end Snuka's career, but the Superfly was soon back in the ring, flying higher than ever as one of the most popular and exciting personalities on the wrestling scene today.

DUSTY RHODES

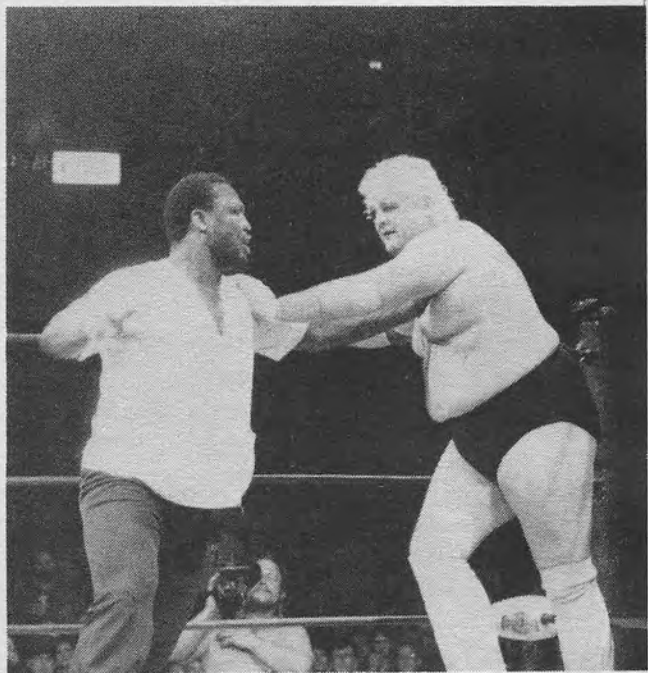
Okay, so he hasn't got a bodybuilder's physique anymore. You might even say he is fat, though you wouldn't say it to his face, or you might be flattened by his "bionic elbow."

Dusty Rhodes has been a professional wrestler since 1969. He's wrestled the best, and has won far more often than he has lost. If he hasn't done it all, he's done most it. Dusty has held dozens of singles and tag-team championships including the Florida heavyweight, the Southern heavyweight, the Georgia heavyweight, the U.S. and the National Wrestling Alliance tag-team titles. He has also been the NWA world champ twice. In the South and in his native Texas, Dusty Rhodes is a legend.

It's more than his championships and ring skills that have endeared Rhodes to the fans, and have given him the title the "American Dream," it's also his joyful, outgoing and enthusiastic personality. Dusty Rhodes's love of life and his work, is communicated immediately and overwhelmingly to everyone who sees him.

There is, however, another side to Rhodes's enthusiasm. It can quickly turn to anger—an anger which has led him into monumental wars with other wrestlers such as Wahoo McDaniel and Ivan Koloff. His matches with current NWA champion Ric Flair are known for their brutality and bitterness. Flair usually comes out on top, but he always knows he has been in a fight.

Rhodes also got himself involved in a bizarre series of events that are strange even in the strange world of pro wrestling. After losing a loser-leaves-the-state match in Florida to Kevin Sullivan, Rhodes disappeared and was said to be



Dusty Rhodes is restrained by celebrity referee Joe Frazer.

in Japan. At about the same time a new figure, a masked wrestler calling himself "Midnight Rider" suddenly appeared. Although you couldn't see his face, the Rider looked like Rhodes, whose physique is unmistakable. He also wrestled like Rhodes. The April 1984 issue of *Wrestling* declared flatly: "Sure, we all knew that Dusty was the Midnight Rider."

The Midnight Rider beat another masked wrestler called Lucifer, who everyone knew was Kevin Sullivan, an avowed devil worshiper in a fairly obvious disguise. The Rhodes-Sullivan feud picked up again in Lakeland, Florida, and by this time both wrestlers were unmasked. The "Dream" entered the arena to the strains of Bob Dylan's "Midnight Rider," then he proceeded to give Sullivan a drubbing. Just when Sullivan was about finished, a large, masked figure, who looked like the Midnight Rider, lumbered into the ring and beat Dusty into unconsciousness and then put the nearly unconscious Sullivan on top of him. The fans had no idea what was happening. Neither did referee Nick Alfonso, who had been knocked out earlier in the match. He awoke just in time to count Rhodes out.

Back in the dressing room, Sullivan unmasked the Midnight Rider, revealing one of his own evil protégé's, Karma. But was Karma the original Midnight Rider, or was the Midnight Rider really Dusty Rhodes, as everyone had first believed? Dusty wasn't talking.

But as we said before, in the world of pro wrestling anything can happen, and it usually does.

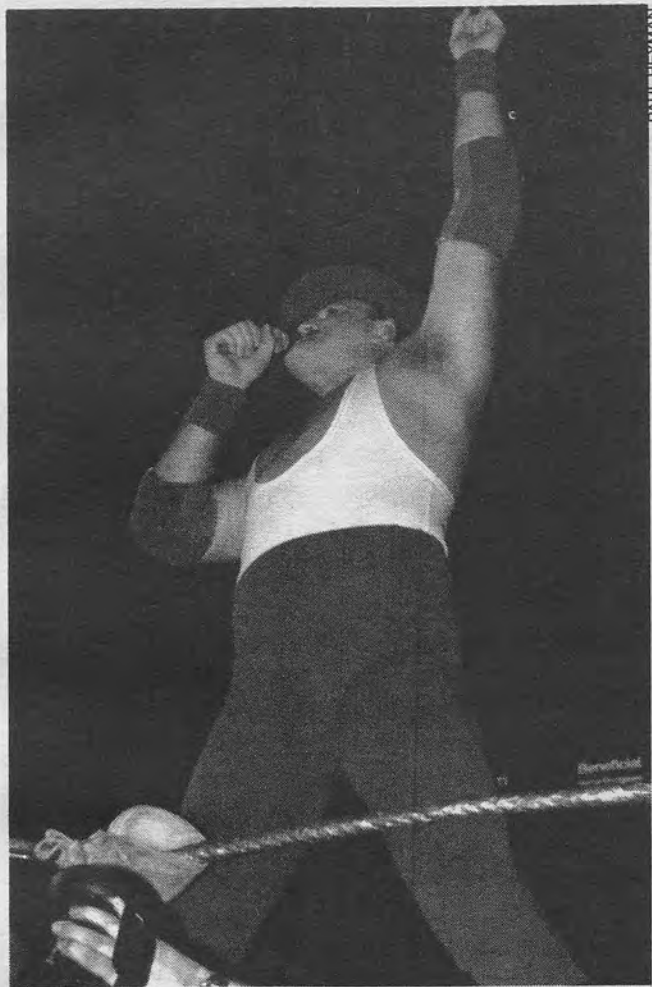
SERGEANT SLAUGHTER

Right now Sergeant Slaughter is riding the crest of fan popularity. He is one of the most admired wrestlers in the nation. When he switched from one wrestling promotional group to another the move created real shock waves throughout the wrestling world. Yet "Sarge" wasn't always the most popular guy in wrestling.

Sarge left the Marine Corps back in 1973 and learned how to wrestle at the Verne Gagne wrestling school in Minnesota. Among his classmates were such future superstars as Ken Patera and Ric Flair.

Sergeant Robert Slaughter had been a DI—a drill instructor at the Marine Corps base at Parris Island for five years. He insists that he was the toughest DI at the base, and that his men hated his guts. "But they never regretted being in my company. Many survived Vietnam because of my training."

In the Marines his men had nicknamed him "Iron jaw" or "Black hat," and when the jut-jawed Sarge came into the ring wearing that black hat, mirrored sunglasses and carrying a swagger stick, he looked like every recruit's nightmare of a tough, sadistic DI.



PAUL HEYMAN

Sergeant Slaughter leads the cheers.

That's what he acted like, too. For a long time he was managed by the late Grand Wizard of wrestling, one of the most influential of wrestling managers, but one who rarely encouraged his wrestlers to bother with the rules. Sarge was devoted to him. "I trusted Wizard with my life. If Wizard had been a Marine, what a field marshal he would be. He was the best manager in wrestling."

For several years, Sarge pursued Bob Backlund's WWF title, often deriding "Howdy Doody Backlund," and sometimes using his swagger stick on Backlund in and out of the ring. The fans were as likely to throw paper cups at Sarge as they were to cheer him.

Sarge didn't just rely on rule-breaking tactics. He had a full range of holds and maneuvers including an excellent flying drop kick. Sarge is deceptively agile for a big man—he's six foot and weighs nearly 300 pounds. But his bread-and-butter hold is the cobra clutch, which can put an opponent out in a matter of seconds.

"I learned the cobra clutch in the Corps. We taught judo, jujitsu, and karate. I learned the cobra clutch while stationed in Japan, but perfected it to where nobody can escape it."

In 1983 things began to change for Sarge. The Wizard died unexpectedly, and the loss hit Sarge hard. Then Sarge engaged in a memorable feud with the Iron Sheik. It was superpatriot Sergeant Slaughter against the America-hating Iranian.

Fans stopped jeering and began chanting, "U.S.A., U.S.A.," when Sarge appeared. Instead of a villain he had become a hero—one of the biggest. Fans voted him "Inspirational Wrestler of the Year" in 1984. It was one of the biggest popularity turnabouts in wrestling history.

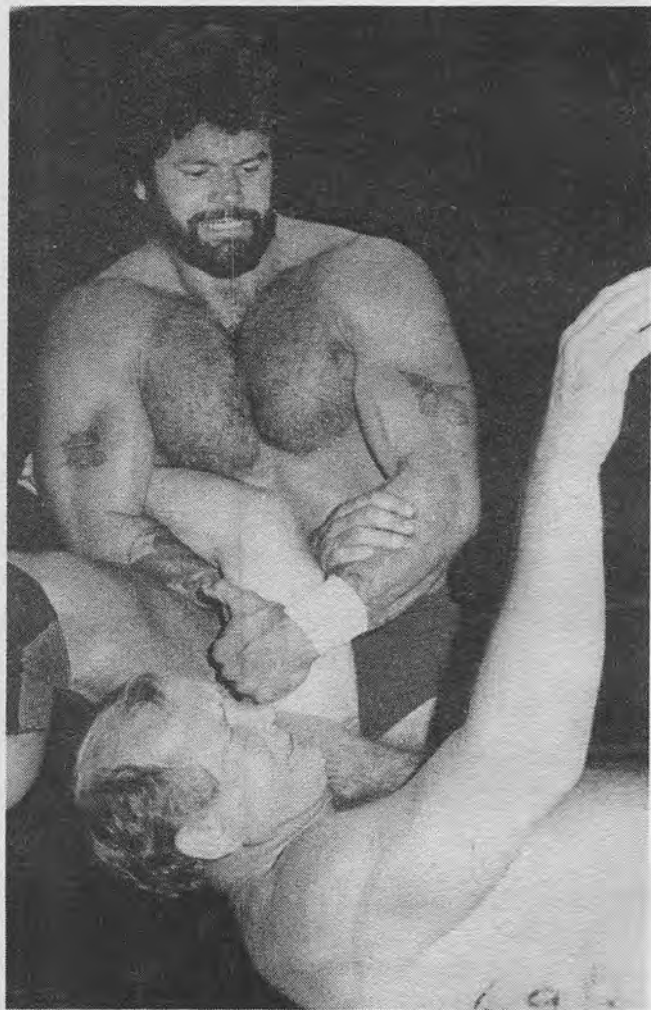
Early in 1985 Sarge dropped a bombshell. He switched from the World Wrestling Federation to the new Pro Wrestling USA group. What had happened? The Iron Sheik had defeated Bob Backlund and briefly held the WWF championship. Then Hulk Hogan beat the Sheik. In order to reach the top, Sarge would have to get a match with Hogan. That didn't seem to be in the cards.

"I'll never get a shot at Hulk Hogan as long as he's champion; the WWF promoters and officials don't sanction those kinds of matches," Sarge told *Inside Wrestling*.

It was time to move on. It was time to look for new worlds to conquer. And conquer them Sergeant Slaughter will.

BILLY JACK

It takes only one quick look to tell you why Billy Jack is one of America's most popular wrestlers. Even in a sport dominated by huge, muscular men the six-foot-three, superbly muscled Billy is a standout. The muscles came from weightlifting.



Billy Jack tightens his grip on an opponent.

He can bench press nearly 500 pounds. The fighting skills came from the streets.

Billy grew up poor in Portland, Oregon. He lived in the sort of neighborhood where kids learned to fight early. They had to. "I always liked physical activity, but I used to fight a lot," he said. "I enjoyed fighting." His fighting got him into several scrapes with the law.

As he got older, Billy started bodybuilding, but he also spent a lot of time playing racquetball, a sport that takes speed and agility. It's not the sort of activity that a man of Billy's size usually does well, yet he won a YMCA championship. He also won some West Coast bodybuilding competitions.

But Billy's life was going nowhere until he was spotted by Portland wrestling promoter Don Owens. At least 50 guys a week would come into Owens's office trying to break into pro wrestling. The promoter thought he saw something special in the muscular-yet-agile young man. Even so, it was far from an easy road. Billy survived a tough and grueling apprenticeship wrestling throughout Western Canada.

When he returned to the United States, Billy Jack's rise through the wrestling ranks was rapid. He soon captured the Pacific Northwest heavyweight championship. Then Billy Jack expanded his area of operations, and after a series of nearly legendary battles he was able to wrest the Florida state heavyweight title from Kendo Nagasaki. He

has also battled NWA champ Ric Flair, but as yet has not been able to take the belt from the more experienced Flair.

From a tough, quick-tempered kid with a talent for getting into trouble, Billy has matured into one of the most popular and controlled wrestlers on the scene today. In a world of big egos as well as big muscles, Billy is refreshingly humble and appreciative of the fan support he has received.

"The fans pay my salary; they buy the tickets that pay the rent. Without the fans, I would be nothing. I'm a pro wrestler, but I'm no better than anybody else. I'm just out there trying to make a living like anybody else," he told *Wrestling All Stars* interviewer Lucy Taylor.

Billy Jack is unfailingly courteous and gracious to the fans that flock around him at every match. He never brushes anyone aside; in fact, he goes out of his way to greet fans. He seems an unusually friendly, almost gentle man. Gentle, that is, until he steps into the ring. After that—well, an awful lot of wrestlers will testify that those bulging muscles aren't just for show.

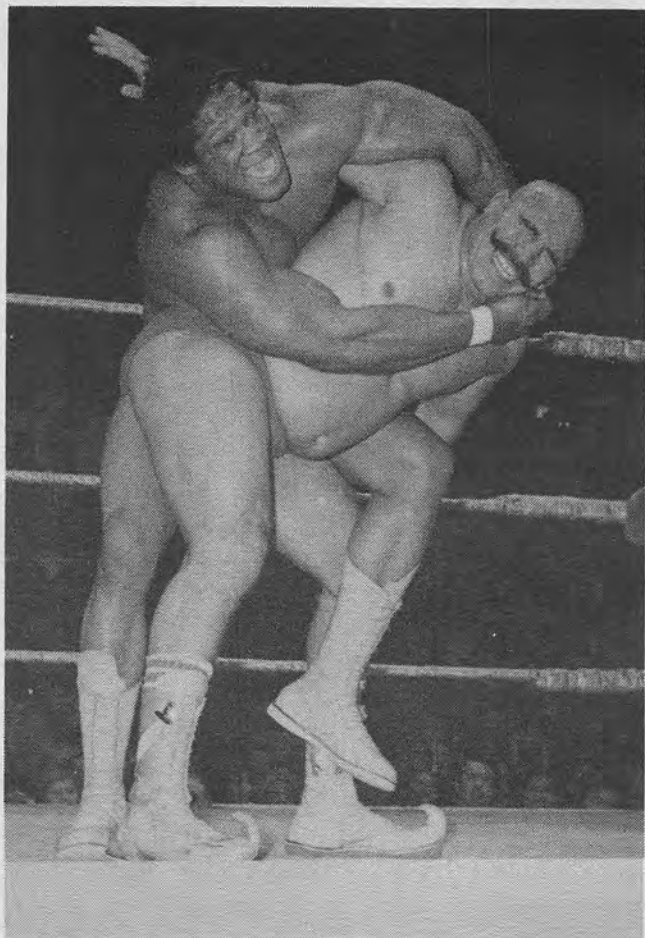
TONY ATLAS

Tony Atlas once held the bodybuilding title of Mr. USA. It's not hard to see why. He is six feet one and a half inches of solid well-defined muscle.

Although he hasn't been active in bodybuilding for several years now, he looks as if he could still compete for the title and win.

The rumor has always been that bodybuilders are all show—plenty of muscles but no real strength, no stamina and certainly no agility. Watch Tony Atlas in the ring and you'll know those rumors are false. Not only can he pick up a 300-pound opponent high over his head and slam the man to the mat, he can also absorb an incredible amount of punishment. He is a master of aerial moves, such as the flying drop kick, which take agility plus. Ironically, the maneuver for which he is best known and most feared is not one he learned while bodybuilding. It's the head butt. It's just what it sounds like—he knocks heads with his opponent, and it's the other guy who falls. Sometimes he performs a particularly spectacular head butt by leaping off the top rope and crashing head first into his opponent. If he connects, it's the last move in the match.

Atlas made his professional debut as a wrestler on July 10, 1975, defeating a masked wrestler known as the Scorpion. After that, it was a quick rise, but not quite to the top. He spent some time pursuing Ric Flair's championship title. "I've beaten him but never when the belt was on the line." He also chased Bob Backlund's title without success. While he continues to wrestle in the World Wrestling Federation his chances at beating, or even getting a title shot at current champ



Tony Atlas versus the Iron Sheik

Hulk Hogan seem slim. Yet the championship is something that Tony Atlas really wants. "It would be great to become the very first black wrestler to hold the championship of wrestling," he says.

Atlas is a clean wrestler, but he's been in the business long enough to know the tricks. "If punching and kicking are needed, I will. I don't look for it, but if fighting is called for, I'll fight, and brother, I can fight. I've been fighting since I was a kid and know all the dirty tricks . . . and more."

While Tony Atlas has been quite successful in individual matches, his successes as part of a tag team have been even greater. He has teamed up with the likes of "Captain Redneck" and Rocky "Soulman" Johnson to defeat teams as formidable as the Iron Sheik and Ivan Koloff.

MIL MASCARAS

Wrestlers have a lot of reasons for putting on masks. Sometimes a well-known wrestler will lose a match, leave town and then come back in a mask in order to avenge himself. There is a lot of phony confusion about his real identity. But most of the time the fans know who's behind the mask and why, even if the masked man will never admit it. That sort of thing happened so often that some fans began to complain.

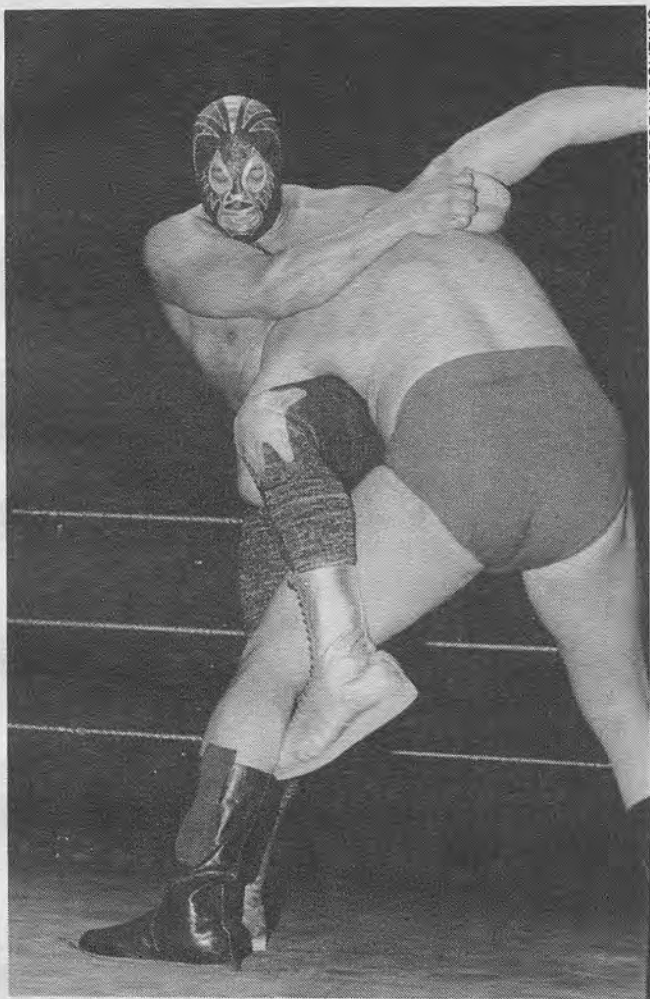
But there are some wrestlers who have worn masks throughout their entire careers. The tradition of the masked wrestler is especially strong in Mexico where a series of masked wrestlers have been regarded as national heroes. None has been more acclaimed than Mil Mascaras. The name, like the true identity of the wrestler, is a mystery. It means "one thousand masks," and it sometimes seems as if Mascaras has that many. He is always changing his masks, which can range from the grotesque to the beautiful.

Mascaras's reasons for wearing masks are not mysterious at all. If his identity were known, he would be mobbed by fans. Now he can lead a normal private life. Unlike some wrestlers, who glory in publicity, Mascaras is a very private man. And he's something of an intellectual, unusual in the wrestling world. Mascaras likes to go undisturbed to museums, plays or fine restaurants.

In the ring, Mascaras's style is as unmistakable as his mask. He's a high flyer who specializes in the flying drop kick and head scissors. And he's been wrestling that way for fifteen years.

Mascaras also has one of the best physiques in the wrestling business, and he's an obsessively "scientific" wrestler. He doesn't break the rules; he doesn't even like to bend them.

Mascaras is popular with wrestling fans all over the world, particularly in his native Mexico. But some have charged that his unflagging good-guy style has lost him the attention of major American



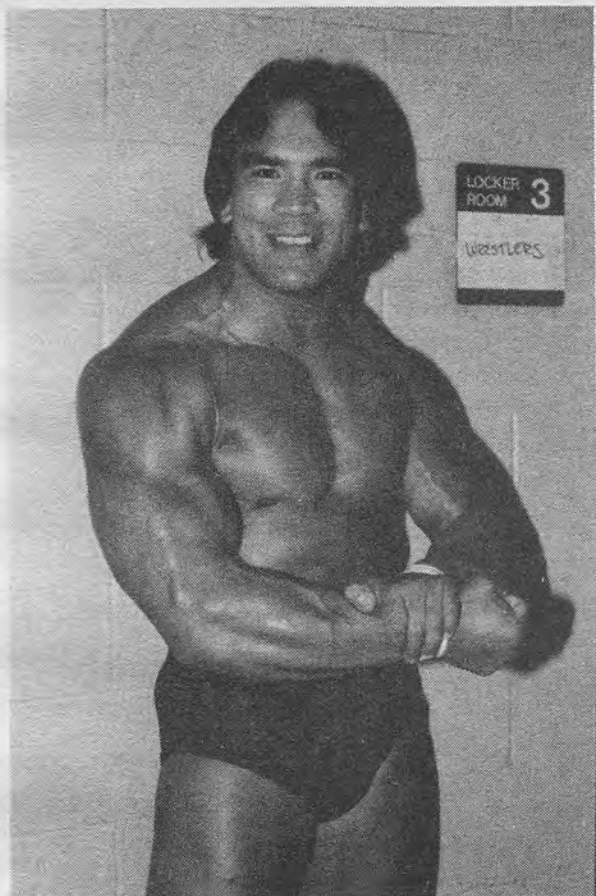
Mil Mascaras, the man of a thousand masks

promoters. They say that while he is one of the best and most spectacular wrestlers around, and has been for a long time, he has never been given the kind of matches that he deserves, that he has never been given the championship shots. The charge is unprovable. All we can say is that Mil Mascaras is a great wrestler who should be seen more often.

RICK STEAMBOAT

A word that comes up often in any discussion of Rick Steamboat is "tormented." That seems an odd word to describe this talented and handsome young wrestler who was once dubbed the "Happy Hawaiian." Yet Steamboat seems to suffer from real doubts about his chosen career.

Many wrestlers have complained about excessive violence in wrestling. They are openly concerned about the pressure put on them by the fans, and by the incredibly demanding wrestling schedule. And lots of wrestlers have threatened to quit. Rick Steamboat was one of the few who actually did quit at the height of his career. In 1984 he went back to managing his gym and health club in Charlotte, North Carolina. Most wrestling fans assumed that his decision to quit was real enough and not just a stunt to build up fan interest. But the cynics said that Rick wouldn't stay away forever. And in this case the cynics were right. Whether it was the glory, the



Rick Steamboat

money or a bit of both, Steamboat is back. He may not be completely happy about it, but the fans certainly are.

Although he is still a young man, Rick is a veteran of nearly ten years of the wrestling wars. He was named rookie of the year by the fans in 1977. Throughout most of his career, Rick has been the very model of a scientific wrestler. He's strong and quick. Along with all the usual wrestling moves he makes good use of his knowledge of karate; his back kicks, back fists and double chops are well remembered by all of those who have had the misfortune to encounter them. His best-known hold is the abdominal stretch.

Unlike many wrestlers, however, Steamboat does not like to rely on a single spectacular submission hold, no matter how effective it may be. He likes to vary his moves so that his opponents are always off guard. He has the quickness and skill to do that. Steamboat believes versatility is his greatest asset.

A fan favorite from the moment he began his career, Steamboat has been particularly successful when teamed with Jay Youngblood. "We seem to have made a career out of holding the National Wrestling Alliance world tag-team belts—we held them five separate times," Steamboat says. But the big prize, an individual championship belt, has so far eluded him. That's not for want of trying. His battles with NWA world champion Ric Flair have been monumental. Flair, who has

wrestled practically everyone, still rates Steamboat as his toughest opponent to date.

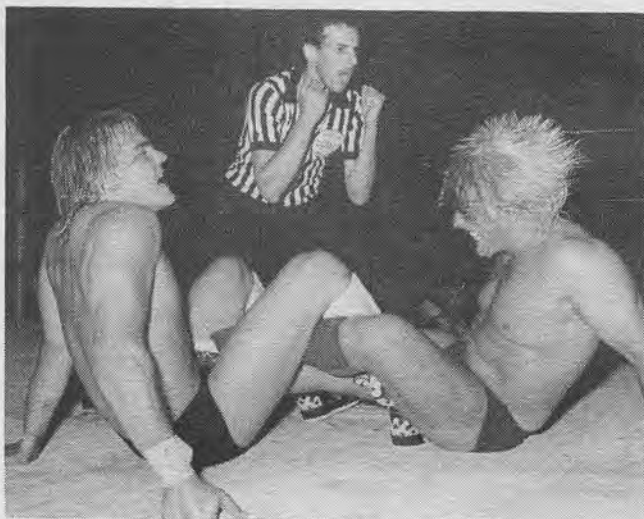
If he sticks to wrestling, moody Rick Steamboat may yet become an individual champion.

BARRY WINDHAM

Wrestling is a family tradition for Barry Windham. He's the son of former pro football player and still active pro wrestler Black Jack Mulligan. When Barry took up wrestling he wanted to stand on his own, so he took his mother's family name, Windham.

Still, everyone knew who Barry's father was, and father and son wrestled successfully as a tag team. However, there were and still are differences between them, differences in style and personality. While Barry has inherited his father's toughness and aggressiveness, he is a much more scientific wrestler, less of a brawler and mauler. He is also an extremely handsome and personable young man who rapidly became a wrestling idol.

Then Barry Windham became involved in one of those bizarre confusions of identity that can happen only in the world of pro wrestling. In November 1983, Windham was humiliated in a Florida match with one of the real baddies, Cowboy Ron Bass. Bass's manager, J. J. Dillon,



Barry Windham (left) and Ric Flair

gloated that Windham “ran like the cowardly yellow dog that he is!”

Windham did indeed drop from the wrestling scene. But a few weeks later a muscular young athlete wearing yellow tights and a yellow mask showed up on the Florida scene and began beating up on the bad guys. This mysterious newcomer called himself “Dirty Yellow Dog.”

That a wrestler will disappear and then suddenly reappear wearing a mask is not unknown in wrestling. So the fans assumed that DYD was Barry Windham out to avenge his humiliation.

The May 1984 issue of *The Wrestler* began an article in the following way: "You don't have to look very closely at Dirty Yellow Dog to know that the man behind the yellow mask is Barry Windham. His walk, voice and ring style make it impossible for him to hide his identity."

Then Barry Windham showed up insisting that he was not, and never had been, Dirty Yellow Dog. He was even photographed with the masked mystery man. However, that could also have been part of the deception. Someone else could have temporarily donned the disguise. Where does the truth lie? We will probably never know.

But for the present the Dirty Yellow Dog has returned to wherever he came from and Barry Windham is back without a mask, that is, if he ever wore one in the first place. The fans, particularly the female fans, are glad to have an unmasked Barry back, for he has been consistently regarded as one of the best-looking and sexiest of the wrestlers.

Barry has teamed up with another popular young wrestler, Mike Rotundo, to capture, at least briefly, the WWF tag-team championship. Barry Windham is one of those wrestlers who you are going to be hearing from for a long time to come.

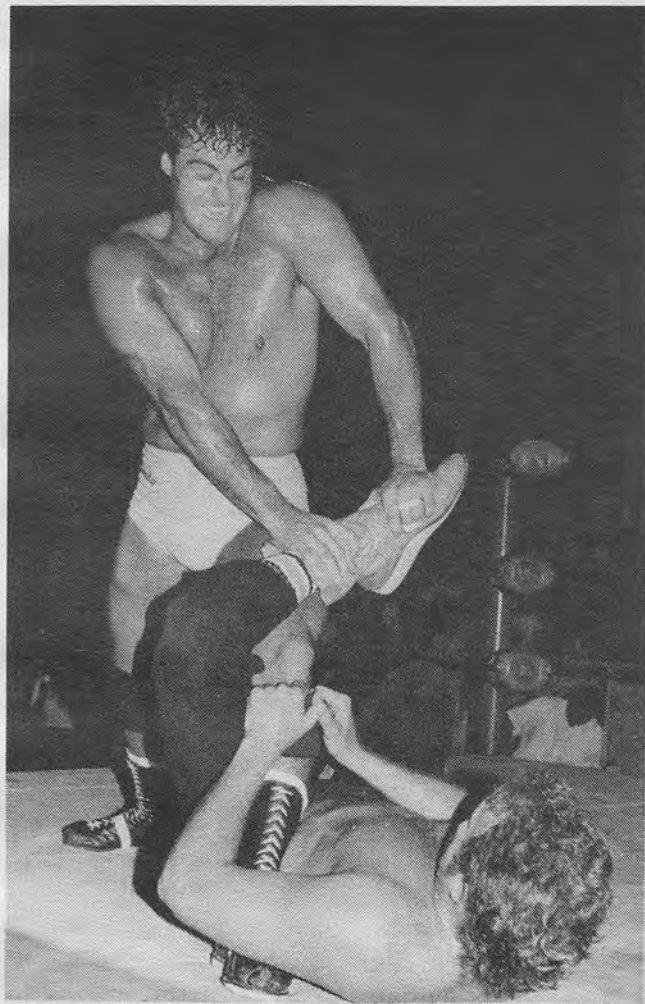
MIKE ROTUNDO

Sometimes you look at a wrestler and wonder, "What's a nice guy like him doing in a business like this? Wrestling is a business for brutes and braggarts. Even the good guys are brutes."

There is no bluster or phoniness about Rotundo. He's modest about his victories and makes no excuses for his losses. Of course, he doesn't lose very often, and wrestling experts have dubbed him as one of the young wrestlers who has emerged during the '80s possessing genuine superstar potential.

Rotundo was an outstanding high-school athlete, and while at Syracuse University he won an Eastern championship for wrestling. Upon graduation, he decided to make pro wrestling his career. He trained for it and then entered an international tournament in Germany. Then he started on the hard road that most American pro wrestlers must travel. Like a gypsy, he went from town to town wrestling wherever he could get a match. The fans and the promoters began to take notice of this handsome, talented and likable six-foot-two, 240-pound young man. Rotundo began getting better matches against better opponents, winning most of them impressively.

He even wrestled National Wrestling Alliance champ Ric Flair several times, although the crafty veteran was always able to prevail. However, Rotundo was no pushover for Flair. The



Mike Rotundo, rising young wrestling star

champ must be looking over his shoulder, for one day when Rotundo is a little older and a little more experienced, the outcome may be very different. Rotundo definitely has his eye on the champ's belt.

In the meantime he has teamed up with another popular young wrestler, Barry Windham, in an effective tag team. The pair briefly held the World Wrestling Federation tag-team title until they were robbed of it in an exceptionally dirty match with the Iron Sheik and Nikoli Volkoff at the Wrestlemania extravaganza at the end of March 1985.

Mike Rotundo is a name that wrestling fans will hear a lot more of in the near future.

JUNKYARD DOG

One thing that a lot of wrestlers complain about, publicly and privately, is the pressure. The worst part may be the pressure of traveling. A typical wrestler is on the road almost constantly. He has very little chance to live a normal home life.

Then there are the pressures that the fans put on wrestlers to keep up their images inside and outside of the ring.

A good wrestler can make money—lots of it. A lot of wrestlers are in it for the money, and many will admit that quite openly. But the man who wrestles under the name Junkyard Dog loves his

work. When asked by a wrestling publication to name his greatest fear, the Dog, or JYD, unhesitatingly said "retirement."

JYD is one of the men who feels that he really owes his life to wrestling. "Before I was a wrestler, my sense of self-respect was about zero. I couldn't help myself or anybody that I loved." Now he's a well-traveled celebrity, and he loves it.

JYD also loves the adulation of his fans. He gets plenty of that, for he is one of the most popular wrestlers around. When his theme, "Another One Bites the Dust," starts and the Dog comes dancing down the aisle and into the ring, the fans are ready to dance right along with him. His "big thump," an extrapowerful version of the power slam, is one of the most feared finishing maneuvers in wrestling.

Among JYD's many memorable matches, perhaps the most famous are the ones he had during 1984 with the brutal Kamala. Kamala, a 300-pound mystery man, had been intimidating opponents ever since he first appeared in America. JYD was one of the few who refused to be intimidated. His comment was, "That guy is too fat. He's out of shape. . . . I'm not afraid of some overgrown fat boy."

Brave words, because Kamala was considerably more than an overgrown fat boy. But JYD showed no more fear of the much larger man in the ring, and he prevailed.



Junkyard Dog (right) twists the arm of Greg "The Hammer" Valentine.

For much of his career, JYD wrestled throughout the South, but by 1985 he had signed up with the World Wrestling Federation and was winning new fans in the Northeast and throughout the country via national television.

JIMMY VALIANT

In his present phase, Jimmy Valiant calls himself the "Boogie-Woogie Man," and acts like some sort of survivor from the '60s. He's always going on about peace and love and he speaks in a

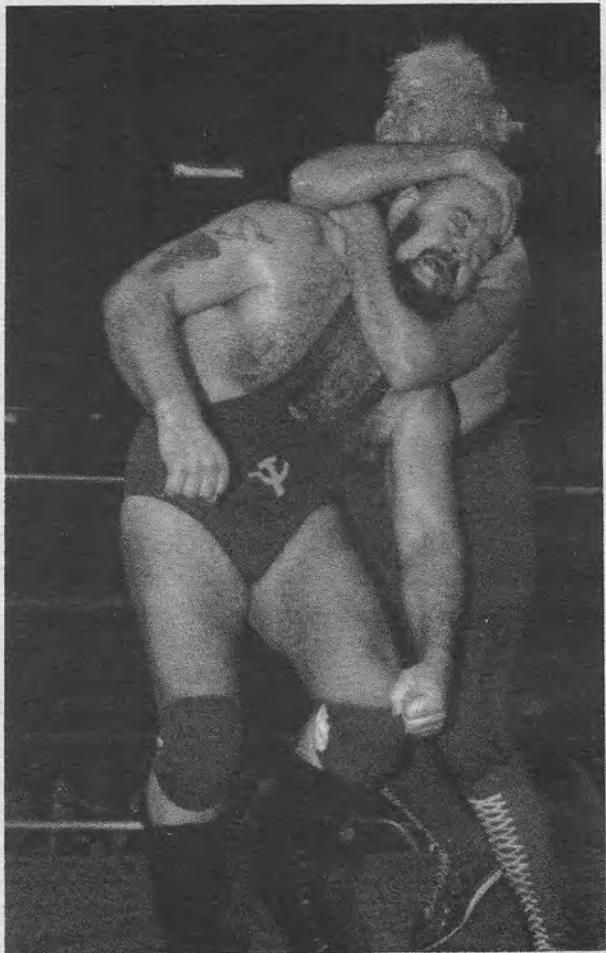
strange sort of jive talk. The following is a brief sample from an article that he wrote for *Wrestling Illustrated*:

"Because the heart is where the home is, you know what I'm saying? And my heart is dancing like my feet and my left foot is Baryshnikov and my right foot is Michael Jackson. And I'm dancing, daddy my heart is dancing and my fingers are dancing over this here typewriter. . . ."

No one is quite sure what he's saying, but whatever it is, he's saying it with a lot of energy. Energy is what you can expect to see at any match in which the Boogie-Woogie Man is involved. He comes dancing down the aisle to the cheers of the fans, and once he steps inside the ring he goes absolutely wild. There is nothing subtle or scientific about Valiant's style—he just goes at his opponent like a madman. Usually it works.

The Boogie-Woogie Man's career is another classic example of how a wrestler can completely turn his image around. When Jimmy started his wrestling career he was often teamed with his brothers "Luscious" Johnny Valiant and "Gentleman" Jerry Valiant. Jimmy and Johnny were particularly successful as a tag team, capturing titles all over the world. But the Valiants would win no popularity contests; they were among the most hated wrestlers of their time.

After they split, Jimmy Valiant wound up in Tennessee. There the New-York-born wrestler



Jimmy Valiant, the Boogie Woogie man, has opponent Ivan Koloff in trouble.

became a huge favorite throughout the South as a good guy. What happened? The Boogie-Woogie Man claims that he hasn't got the slightest idea.

"What's gotten into the crazy world anyway?" he asked wrestling expert George Napolitano. "Hey, I've always been the same fun-loving Jimmy. Only today the people's mentality is different. . . . I haven't changed and I've kept pace right along. If you see me tomorrow, it'll still be me. I'll be shucking and jiving and doing my thing just as I have all my life."

Whatever the reason, the Boogie-Woogie Man is just about the most unlikely Southern hero you can imagine.

THE BAD GUYS

"ROWDY" RODDY PIPER

Glasgow-born Roddy Piper isn't the world's greatest wrestler. Everyone, except Roddy himself, would probably agree with that statement. It's his mouth, not his muscles, that has lifted him to wrestling superstardom. That's no small accomplishment. The ability to insult and infuriate your opponent outside of the ring is much prized among pro wrestlers. They regularly exchange hideous threats. Wrestlers have become masters of verbal as well as physical violence. None is more masterful, or cleverer, than Roddy Piper.

Roddy's verbal skills earned him a chance to run his own wrestling interview show called *Piper's Pit*. And that's where his career really took off. *Piper's Pit* isn't like Johnny Carson's *The Tonight Show*, and it certainly isn't *Meet the Press*. It's *Piper's Pit*, and there's nothing else quite like it on television.

The *Piper's Pit* set is covered in Scotch plaid. Roddy's director's chair is much higher than the chairs his guests sit on. "Of course, my chair is higher than theirs, because when I'm in the ring I expect everybody to look up to me."

Roddy has recently taken his show on the road, and he proved that he can insult a whole city as easily as he can insult a single guest.

A recent issue of *WWF Magazine* described a Piper visit to St. Louis. He told the local audience that St. Louis was the gateway to the East and the West because no one in his right mind would want to live there.

He told Junkyard Dog, his main guest, that Dog's "joking" looked like something invented for roach removal. But when Roddy started laughing so hard at his own jokes that he fell out of his chair, it was JYD's turn to laugh. The interview ended with JYD cracking a chair over Roddy's head.

Roddy's most notorious interview was with long-time foe Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka. On that occasion Roddy smashed a banana into the Superfly's face and hit him with a coconut. Superfly retaliated by breaking up the *Piper's Pit* set and Roddy himself.

The whole feud between Captain Lou Albano and Cyndi Lauper erupted on *Piper's Pit*. It was there that Lou, with Piper's enthusiastic encouragement, insulted Cyndi and rock music in general. Roddy loves a good argument, or even a bad



Roddy Piper (right) faces an angry Tonga Kid.

argument. So when Cyndi and Lou were set to bury the hatchet, it was the irrepressible Piper himself who rushed into the ring at Madison Square Garden to break Cyndi's platinum record over Lou's head. He then went around breaking up guitars and proclaiming, "The future of rock 'n' roll is down the toilet." He even teased Hulk Hogan about his receding hairline. The Hulkster settled that score, but it didn't silence Roddy.

Roddy's antics are big wherever he goes. When he showed up unannounced (at least publicly unannounced) on *Saturday Night Live* to disrupt the appearance of Hulk Hogan and Mr. T, some critics said that he was funnier than the regular

comedians on the show. He was such a big hit that when NBC decided to put together a major network wrestling program, they were sure to include a place for *Piper's Pit*.

If Roddy is ready to insult the good guys and worse, he is always polite and encouraging to his fellow villains. He gives Big John Studd and the Iron Sheik plenty of time to rant and rave. And, if they are stuck for a bad word to say about someone, Roddy is happy to help them out.

It's vulgar, tasteless and gross. But *Piper's Pit* is a lot of fun.

Roddy's duties as a TV host have cut down on his wrestling appearances. In the ring he behaves—in the words of one commentator—"like a swinish bully." He can be an emotional and out-of-control wrestler. "Roddy's not too tightly wrapped," says wrestling announcer and former wrestler Gorilla Monsoon. Yet he is not one of wrestling's true wild men. He attacks in a fury only when he is quite sure his opponent won't attack back. He's not afraid to leave the ring, or even the arena, if the going gets too rough. And he's a real master of the Pearl Harbor-type attack. If an opponent turns his back, Roddy is likely to hit him with a chair. He's a big, strong guy with considerable wrestling skills. He just doesn't bother to use them most of the time.

When Roddy appears, the fans erupt with boos and jeers. Roddy is ready to answer them back in kind. Yet under all the fan hatred runs a strong

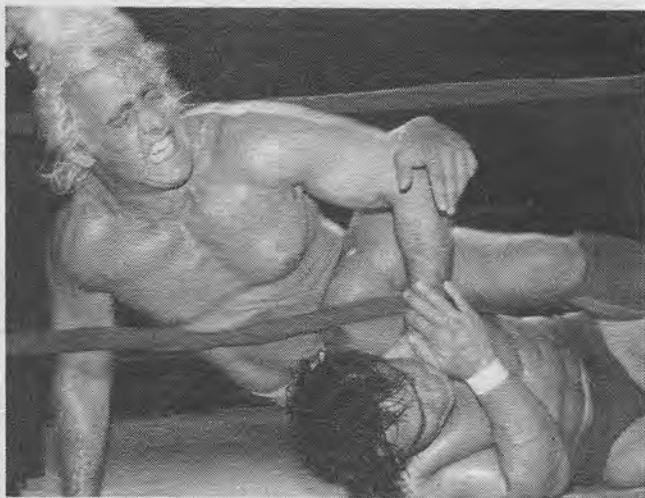
current of sneaking admiration for the loudmouth from Glasgow. He is so magnificently swinish that he is almost lovable—almost.

RIC FLAIR

If you ask a knowledgeable wrestling fan who's the best wrestler in America today, the name that he will come up with most often is National Wrestling Alliance champ Ric Flair.

As we have noted, the wrestling world is a confusing mass of regional associations, each having its own champion, sometimes several. Wrestlers often move from one association to another, but unlike many other sports the top-rated athletes do not necessarily face one another. There is no tournament of champions. In the April 1985 issue of *Wrestling All Stars*, writer Nick Annunziata speculated over who might come out on top if there was a "Wrestling Super Bowl" (or "Super Brawl"). His conclusion—the "Ultimate Champion" has to be Ric Flair. Flair doesn't have the size or strength of a Hulk Hogan, but he does have, in Annunziata's words, "poise, confidence, experience and ability."

Flair, a Minneapolis, Minnesota, native, always wanted to be a top pro wrestler. When he began wrestling it was under the title "Nature Boy," because of his long blond hair. While he is



Ric Flair and one of his toughest opponents, Rick Steamboat

still occasionally called Nature Boy, Flair no longer needs labels to be recognized.

He won his first NWA title on September 17, 1981, when he defeated the popular Dusty Rhodes for the championship. Since that time he has lost the title several times to the likes of tough Harley Race and Kerry von Erich, but each time he fought back and finally regained the belt.

No one in the wrestling world risks his championship more often, or has a more grueling schedule, than Ric Flair.

"He defends his title night after night, all over

the globe," says wrestling expert George Napolitano. "In one week the champion has been known to put his title on the line in Charlotte, North Carolina, on Sunday afternoon; Toronto Canada, on Sunday evening; and then depart for a tour of the Pacific to wrestle in New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia and the Philippines."

Flair has never really been a popular champion. He's far too egotistical for that. Not only does he brag about his wrestling skills, he is constantly telling everyone who will listen how rich and handsome he is, that he owns a Lear jet and lots of fancy cars and how beautiful women just fall all over him. The champ is openly scornful of the distinction between scientific wrestlers and rule breakers. He says winning is all that counts. He doesn't have the sort of personality that fans can warm up to. But no one can deny his skills and his courage. While other champs have been accused of ducking tough contenders or of not wrestling enough, no one could ever level such an accusation at Flair. He doesn't stick too closely to the rules. He's too clever, too cute to be regarded as one of wrestling's good guys. But he's not just a dirty fighter. He would probably win his matches even if he always obeyed all the rules.

THE IRON SHEIK

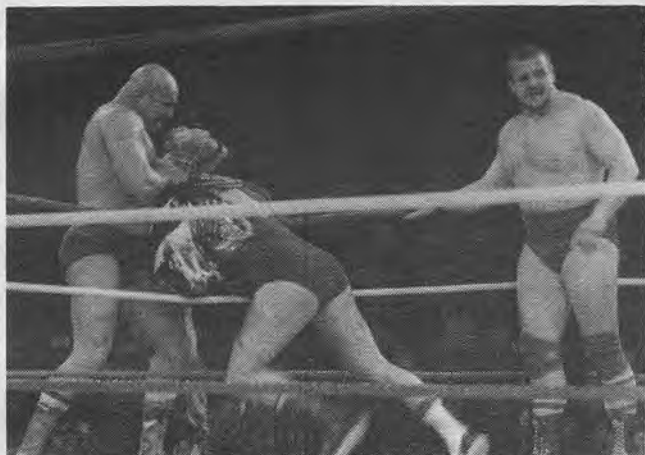
With his shaved head and wickedly curled mustache, the Iron Sheik looks cruel. His arrogant anti-American rhetoric drives fans into a frenzy. During interviews he usually spits "America-hack pfui." The Iron Sheik's battles with Sergeant Slaughter were among the most notable wrestling wars of the '80s. The Sheik was the man who made Slaughter a hero.

But none of this should obscure the fact that whether we hate him or not, the Iron Sheik is a wrestler of exceptional ability. When he took the World Wrestling Federation title from long-time champ Bob Backlund, it was no fluke.

The Sheik represented Iran in the 1972 Olympics in Munich, where he is said to have won a gold medal. It has also been rumored that he was once a member of the late Shah of Iran's elite bodyguard.

The Sheik is truly an international wrestler, and he has wrestled under different names. He has also held many titles in the United States, Europe and Asia. All of this proves that show-business bluster aside, the Iron Sheik really is one of the best wrestlers in the world, and has been for a long time.

The Iron Sheik is an arrogant rule breaker, but he rarely displays the sort of ring cowardice common among rule breakers. He just keeps coming after his opponent, almost maniacally,



PAUL HEYMAN

The Iron Sheik (left) and favorite tag-team partner Nikolai Volkoff

although there is clearly a lot of method to his madness. His curly toed boots always attract attention, and they are used very effectively to kick and stomp opponents.

In order to further infuriate American wrestling fans, the Sheik usually teams up with other anti-American baddies like Nikolai Volkoff. He has also taken on as manager "Classy" Fred Blassie, who, while with the Sheik, trades in his usually flashy clothes for Arab robes, calling himself Ayatollah Blassie.

The Sheik is amazingly strong. He has offered thousands of dollars to anyone who can swing his exercise clubs, and none of wrestling's muscle-

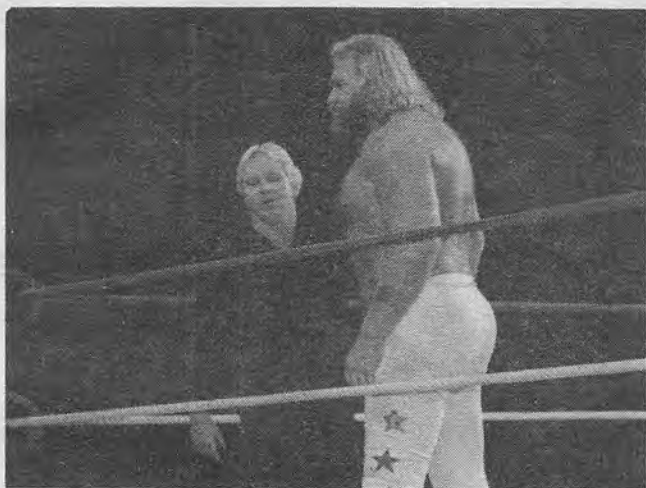
men have ever been able to take up the challenge successfully. He has in his arsenal an array of lethal holds, particularly the camel clutch, almost invariably a submission hold. The Iron Sheik is one tough wrestler. He's a man to be respected—and feared.

BIG JOHN STUDD

One thing that really irritates seven-foot 380-pound Big John Studd is that there is somebody in wrestling bigger than he is. That somebody is, of course, Andre the Giant. Big John, who likes to call himself the "biggest, meanest, baddest man in the sport," insists that Andre really isn't a wrestler, but a "freak" and a "circus side show," whereas he is a "legitimate wrestler," and an "athlete."

True enough, Big John is faster and has more moves than the older Andre. But few of Big John's moves are legal. If he isn't bigger than Andre, he sure is meaner. Still, he has never been able to actually defeat the French giant.

Another big man that sends Studd into a frenzy is Hulk Hogan. Studd and Hogan have met several times and the Hulkster has managed to keep his championship belt, but Big John gave the champ some very anxious moments, particularly in their first championship meeting. Hogan



Big John Studd and his manager Bobby "The Brain" Heenan

admits that Studd was one of the toughest, meanest guys he ever met.

That first meeting after the Hulkster became champion was something of a surprise and an accident. Hogan had been scheduled to meet Jessie "The Body" Ventura, but Jessie had been rushed to the hospital with blood clots in his lungs. The new challenger was Big John, and he had a surprise—he had enlisted the services of manager Bobby "The Brain" Heenan, one of the cleverest men in pro wrestling.

The match was a violent one, which wound up outside the ring with each man battering the other

into near insensibility. The referee was in the process of counting both men out when, at the last second, Heenan was able to push his man back into the ring, and only the Hulk was counted out. Hulk Hogan had lost the match to Big John Studd, but by the rules of the game, since he had not submitted or been pinned, he had not lost the championship. Heenan grabbed the belt and ran, but he was forced to return it later. Naturally, the stage was set for a rematch. Studd and his manager spent the next few weeks badmouthing Hulk on every possible occasion. This time, though it was a hard-fought match, Big John was cleanly pinned, and there was no doubt as to who was still the true champion.

The frustrated Studd went back to his pursuit of Andre the Giant. He managed to cut the Giant's hair during a wild tag-team match, but he didn't actually defeat Andre. You guessed it, there was another rematch, and Studd lost. He may have been reminded of the old saying: "Always a bridesmaid, never a bride," although it's pretty tough to think of Big John Studd as a bridesmaid.

Even though Big John has so far been unable to knock off the two most formidable big men in wrestling, he certainly isn't going to give up. He's very nearly as powerful as he says he is, and in wrestling—as we have said repeatedly—anything can happen.

GREG "THE HAMMER" VALENTINE

For a while there was confusion in wrestling's ranks. Was the chunky, tough and aggressive young wrestler that everyone called "The Hammer" the brother or son of wrestling great of the '50s and '60s Johnny Valentine? At first, most people seemed to believe that the two were brothers (a rumor hinted at by Greg himself). Now the confusion, whether accidental or deliberate, has been cleared up. The Hammer is Johnny Valentine's son, and like his father, Greg Valentine is a very successful wrestler.

Valentine is generally regarded as a villain. He regularly rates high on the list of most hated wrestlers; often he tops the list. The judgment is probably a fair one. And yet in comparison with the tactics employed by some of wrestling's most notorious villains, The Hammer does not seem quite so villainous. Tough, aggressive, unrelenting, and mean—yes. He has seriously injured more than his share of opponents, and he's not the sort of fellow likely to show any mercy to an injured foe. That's probably why he is so widely hated. But he doesn't break all the rules all of the time as others do. He's one of the most skillful and strongest men in the ring. He could win even if he obeyed the rules. The Hammer has demolished a lot of fan favorites.

Currently, Greg Valentine is wrestling in the World Wrestling Federation, and is regarded as

the leading threat to WWF champ Hulk Hogan. He's already held his share of championships, and is hoping to add the big one to his collection.

Although The Hammer wears his blond hair long, there is nothing exotic about his appearance, or bizarre about his style. He's a master of good old-fashioned tough wrestling. He knows all the moves, including his own specialty—the figure-four leg vine, which generally leaves his opponents screaming for mercy, ending the bout. If held too long, it can break a man's leg, and that has happened a couple of times.

There is a suspicion, however, that for a while Greg Valentine put on a mask and wrestled as mystery man Tokyo Joe. The Hammer scoffs at such a suggestion.

"I never needed a mask. This Tokyo Joe wrestler did wrestle like me, but I proved it was not me one night by being at ringside when this Tokyo Joe wrestled. You know, even I can't be in two places at the same time. The fans weren't convinced at any rate, but that's fans for you."

Of course, some fans have a long memory. They know anybody can put on a mask and they recall that confusion over whether Johnny Valentine was The Hammer's father or brother. So it's hardly surprising that they weren't convinced. But Tokyo Joe is gone—at least for now—and Greg "The Hammer" Valentine is still around, gunning for another title.

KEN PATERA

Pound for pound, Ken Patera is probably the strongest wrestler active today. He has the records to prove it. He has 28 world weightlifting records. As a superheavyweight weightlifter he took a bronze medal in the 1972 Olympics in a sport usually dominated by the Russians. Patera was the first American to raise 500 pounds over his head in competition.

Yet, while he's proud of his amateur career, he's also bitter about the fact that Olympic athletes are paid nothing, and expense money barely covers the cost of breakfast. "Those Olympic medals may look great, but they make for a lousy meal," he says.

Patera easily made the transition to pro wrestler, and while he often wore an Olympic patch on his tights when he wrestled, he certainly made no attempt to become an all-American favorite. He was in it for the money—he said so openly and often—and he was ready to do anything he had to in order to make money. If that meant fighting dirty, so be it.

It's not that Patera is just a rule breaker. He obviously has a great deal of strength. He's smart, and he's skillful. His swinging neck breaker, a variation of the full nelson, is one of the most feared holds in wrestling today.

Yet somehow Patera has never achieved the success that might once have been expected of him. He never seems quite able to nail down that



Ken Patera still wearing his Olympic patch

crucial match. That has earned him the reputation of being a "choker," though it's not the sort of thing that one would say when meeting him face to face.

When wrestling experts sit down and talk about Ken Patera, the personal trait that is mentioned most is his greed. Greed was certainly behind one of the strangest incidents in Patera's career. He signed on with wrestler and manager Sheik Adnan El-Kailsey. The former American Olympian donned Arab robes and became known as the "Chic Sheik." It was not the sort of move that would gain Patera any fan popularity. Why did he do it? Patera made no secret of his reason—it was money.

"Remember, I represented the USA as an amateur. That means I got the shaft, like so many other amateurs who dedicated their lives to the sport.

"At least in this arrangement I profit enormously. Everybody has his price, and the ultimate goal of any business person is to enhance his bank account. Believe me, I'm doing that every single day."

Ken Patera is not lovable, not admirable, but he doesn't try to pretend to be something he's not.

THE MAGNIFICENT MURACO

You might think that if you come from Hawaii, and spend a lot of time surfing, swimming or just lying out in the sun getting tan, you might be a pretty easy-going, laid-back fellow.

The "Magnificent" Don Muraco is a native of Hawaii, and he loves all of the above-named activities, but no one would ever describe him as easy-going or laid-back. This big, good-looking wrestler is the first to admit that he's mean, vicious and he loves to punish his opponents. And he never tires of telling people that he's just about the greatest thing in the world.

Inside the ring Muraco is wild and unpredictable. Outside of the ring he's just plain nasty. If a fan asks him to autograph a program, he's as likely to grab the program and tear it up as he is to sign.

Wrestling expert George Napolitano speaks of a calm, subdued Muraco suddenly erupting into a fit of rage. "He seems to have some definite emotional problems," notes Napolitano. On the other hand, perhaps the wildness is all part of his campaign to intimidate opponents, though his six-foot-three, 250-pound body of pure muscle would seem intimidating enough.

At the age of eighteen, Muraco was already over six feet tall and weighed 225 pounds. No wonder he was successful at football, weightlifting and high-school and college wrestling. But he



The Magnificent Muraco (left) and Greg "The Hammer" Valentine (right) with famed manager the late Grand Wizard of Wrestling

preferred football to amateur wrestling, because it was rougher. Then he began watching pro wrestling on television, and he liked what he saw—it was even rougher than football.

When Muraco first became a wrestler he was tough but clean. After a year or so, though, he found that he enjoyed breaking the rules. He lost fans but won matches. After a few years on the most hated list the Magnificent one once again flirted with scientific wrestling. The flirtation lasted for about six weeks, and then he was back

to his old biting, eye gouging and very winning ways.

Muraco says that a lot of the wrestling rules are a joke, and the only difference between him and many others is that he defies the rules openly and admits it. But sometimes even the Magnificent Muraco goes too far. In Florida, he was caught trying to smuggle brass knuckles into the ring. He was fined and suspended briefly. When questioned about the incident Muraco certainly was not contrite or apologetic. He said that the money was nothing to him because he had plenty (and he has) and he needed the time off, anyway.

"My opponent is lucky that I didn't use them on him. I would have split his head open because I hate his guts."

PAUL "MR. WONDERFUL" ORNDORFF

You have to figure that anyone who calls himself "Mr. Wonderful," and really means it, must have an ego problem. Paul "Mr. Wonderful" Orndorff has just such a problem. It wasn't always that way. Orndorff, a former football player with the New Orleans Saints, came into pro wrestling as one of the good guys. He was a quiet, friendly sort of a fellow who would do his job, sign autographs for the fans and go home. Nothing fancy, nothing bizarre. He was a good, solid wrestler whose future seemed assured.

Then Orndorff changed. A lot of people blame the change on Orndorff's long-time pal Roddy Piper, who also has an ego problem. But nowadays people are blaming Piper for just about everything. Whatever, or whoever, the cause, Orndorff is no longer the well-liked young man who started in wrestling. He has become "Mr. Wonderful," the best and most egotistical fan-baiter in the business.

Before a match he spends a lot of time walking around the ring, yelling at the fans. They get riled up and answer in kind. Orndorff insists that the fans are jealous of him, jealous of his good looks, jealous of his money. "I spend more on manicures in one week than most people pay on their mortgage for the whole year."

Orndorff likes to brag about all the beautiful women who flock to him, but he doesn't stop there. "Have you ever seen the wives and girlfriends these guys bring to the matches? They look like they escaped from a hog farm."

Another Orndorff comment on the people at ringside: "A bunch of 8-to-5 rednecks. These people are all nobodies." Those are not the kind of remarks that are going to win you any popularity contests with the folks who pay to sit at ringside.

Orndorff has a real peculiarity. He hates to be touched by strangers. Anyone who tries is likely to get a violent reaction. He won't even allow the referee to raise his hand in victory. It's really odd



Paul Orndorff and Hulk Hogan

when you consider he makes his living in the contact sport with the most contact.

Many wrestlers are proud of their physiques, and Orndorff (who has become a demon body-builder) has one of the best builds in the business. After winning a match he will usually strike a series of poses to show off all those muscles. But the fans who hate him have latched on to his obsession with his own appearance. They have begun calling him "Paula." It's a chorus that greets him every time he enters the ring. Orndorff points to his enormous arm. "Where do they get

off calling me a girl's name? Did you ever see a woman with a biceps like that?"

Mr. Wonderful was part of Roddy Piper's team in the great Wrestlemania extravaganza on March 31, 1985, in Madison Square Garden. Things were going pretty well for the bad guys until Orndorff was accidentally felled by a blow from one of his own teammates. When he woke up he walked away muttering, "I haven't got any friends anymore." He may be right.

The loss may have changed Orndorff's attitude for, by the summer of '85, he showed signs of becoming a good guy once again.

JESSIE "THE BODY" VENTURA

Jessie Ventura calls everybody else "Jack," but he calls himself "The Body." He does have a magnificent physique. But there are lots of musclemen in wrestling. Jessie's not really in a class with a Hulk Hogan, a Tony Atlas or a Jimmy Snuka.

Jessie's enemies, and he has lots and lots of them, call him "The Mouth" rather than "The Body." Wrestling has lots and lots of loudmouths as well. But in that department Jessie Ventura has only one real competitor, "Rowdy" Roddy Piper himself. And like the Rowdy one, Jessie's real fame may come from what takes place outside of the ring rather than inside it.

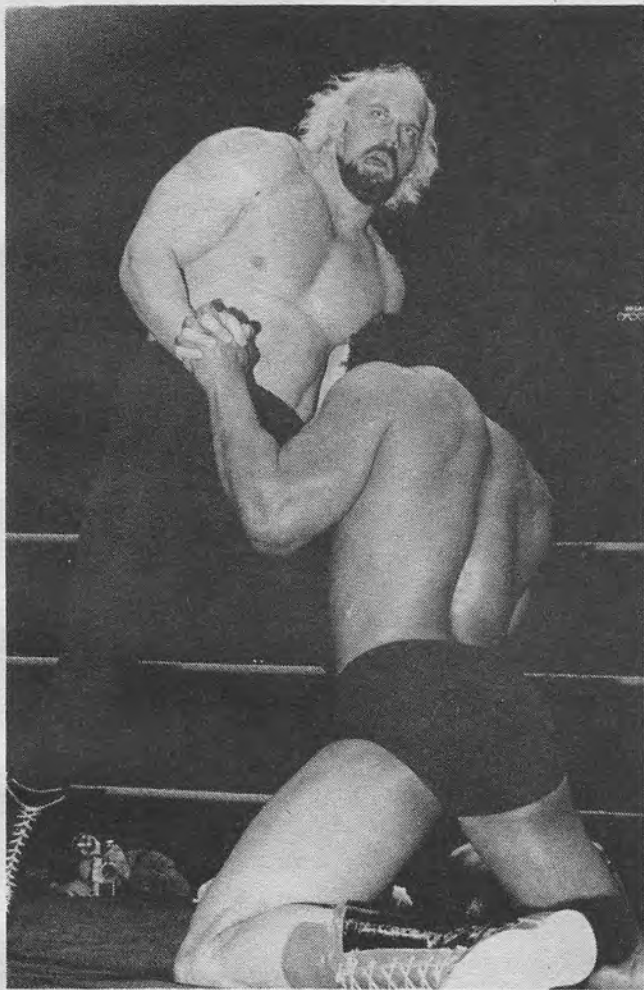
Don't get us wrong—Jessie Ventura is a good wrestler. He has wrestled with the best. To date, his greatest accomplishment came when he teamed up with Adrian Adonis for the American Wrestling Association tag-team championship. Of course, if you hear Jessie tell it, he's never lost a match. He's been cheated by his opponents and robbed by the officials, but he's never lost legitimately, according to Jessie, anyway.

"There's not a man around who can give me half a fight," says Jessie Ventura proudly. There are those who would argue that Jessie Ventura has never won a match legitimately. That's unfair. He's a rule breaker, but he's immensely strong and deceptively quick. He also has the necessary "killer instinct."

Next to his ego, the flashiest thing about Jessie is his outfits. *Wrestling All Stars* magazine described him this way: "Ventura is a freak of sorts, with multi-colored hair that is red, yellow, blue, orange and green. He wears at least a half-dozen earrings into the ring and often a custom-tailored T-shirt from a popular New York sex club."

Jessie is also into sunglasses. He has sunglasses that would make those once worn by Elton John look conservative. He never seems to wear the same pair twice. And then there is the jewel that he wears in the cleft of his chin.

Since Jessie's interviews before and after the match often seem more exciting than his matches, the World Wrestling Federation decided



Jessie "The Body" Ventura

to make him a regular commentator on one of their syndicated wrestling shows.

In this role Jessie Ventura shines, with earrings, sunglasses, jewels, glitter and whatever, badmouthing all the good guys and telling the audience what a wonderful guy he is. And you know what? As a commentator, Jessie "The Body" Ventura is a lot of fun.

THE ROAD WARRIORS

They are big, muscular and mean. They wear lots of leather and studded collars and bracelets. They cut their hair funny, paint their faces and stick their tongues out when someone takes a picture. They are the Road Warriors. And they are also the dominant tag team in the nation since 1983.

Although the Road Warriors officially hold only the American Wrestling Association tag-team title, everyone but rival promoters will admit that they are the best. Whenever independent ratings of tag teams are compiled the Road Warriors always come out on top.

The Road Warriors burst suddenly upon the wrestling scene, and within a year they were on top and stayed there. Yet we still know surprisingly little about them. They are said to be in their twenties (though they look older) and their combined weight is 550 pounds or thereabouts. We don't even know their names—they are called

"Animal" and "Hawk." Animal is six foot two and weighs 285 pounds; the leaner Hawk is six foot four and a mere 265 pounds.

It's said that they began their careers with a southside Chicago motorcycle gang, which has since disowned them. They came into the wrestling game armed with strength and brutality, but no wrestling skills to speak of. Why did they become wrestlers? "Basically we're in it for the money and to get out of Chicago," they said. For a while they got along on pure power alone. And then they met up with wrestling manager "Precious" Paul Ellering. He helped them perfect their technique, without letting them lose any of their awesome powers of intimidation. A few months after meeting "Precious" Paul, they had a tag-team championship.

After that, the Road Warriors felt that they didn't need anyone to help them anymore—or to take a share of their winnings. So they angrily fired "Precious" Paul on national television. In the wrestling world events like that are always done on television. Then they beat him up and broke his arm.

But after a while the Road Warriors apparently began to feel that they missed Ellering's guidance. They asked him to come back, and since his bones had set properly, and he wanted the money, he forgave them and came back as manager, though he often looks nervous in the company of his unruly charges.



The Road Warriors with manager "Precious" Paul Ellering

When the Road Warriors were once again voted tag team of the year by the readers of *Wrestling Illustrated*, the magazine commented:

"The Road Warriors may be the most vicious and sadistic tag team in professional wrestling today, but they are also one of the most successful."

That about says it all.

TED DIBIASE

Ted DiBiase is one of those wrestlers whose career makes long-time fans wonder, "What happened?" At one time, not so very many years ago, the good-looking young Nebraska-born wrestler was one of the cleanest, most scientific wrestlers around, and a real fan favorite.

Then suddenly, almost overnight it seemed, DiBiase became not only a vicious rule breaker, but a man who seemed to want to destroy his opponents, not just beat them. When he seriously injured opponent Tommy Rich, DiBiase gloated openly, loudly and often over what he had done. The incident simply helped to enhance his reputation as one of wrestling's most dangerous men. In wrestling, as in all other contact sports, intimidation plays a large part in winning. If the other guy is worried about what might happen to him, the battle is half won.

DiBiase makes no secret about what caused the turnaround in his career. It's money. At one time he loved wrestling, but now he regards it only as a job, though a very well-paying one. The more he wins, the more fans he pulls into the arena, even to jeer him, the more money he will make. What about decency and honor? "Honor is a word for jerks," says DiBiase. For Ted DiBiase, the philosophy of look out for number one has been pushed to its logical extreme.

In addition to the rule breakers usual bag of tricks—choking, kicking, biting and eye goug-



Ted DiBiase about to pin an opponent.

ing—DiBiase often wears a golf glove which opponents swear is loaded with lead. Many wrestling fans also sense in DiBiase a viciousness that transcends the need to win or even to intimidate. That is probably why he regularly ranks so high on the list of most hated wrestlers, well above more flashy bad guys like the Iron Sheik and Roddy Piper.

Many observers have viewed professional wrestling as a giant morality play, a dramatic example of the ancient and ongoing struggle between good and evil. In this view, DiBiase is sort of a fallen angel—once a powerful force for

good who through pride and greed has turned evil. That, of course, makes DiBiase the most dangerous sort of opponent of all. It's a story as old as the human race.

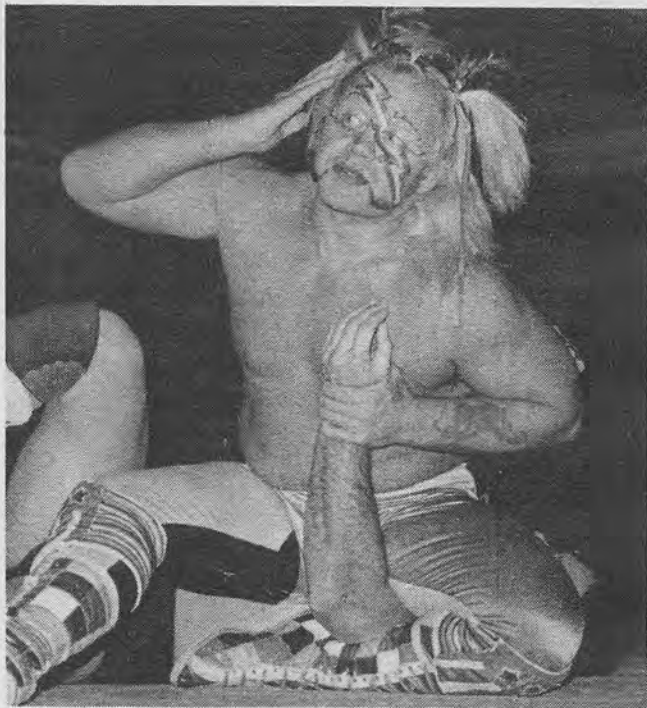
"EXOTIC" ADRIAN STREET

He has been called the Boy George of pro wrestling. But Boy George has recently been sporting a crew cut. The "Exotic" Adrian Street wouldn't be caught dead in that sort of hairstyle. He is, however, interested in music. In fact, he wrote and recorded a song called "I'm in Love With Me" with "Imagine What I Could Do to You" on the flip side. So far the record has only been released in Britain on the Exotic label. He has also appeared in a number of films, most notably *Quest for Fire*.

Street wears a fancy hairdo, which changes regularly, and recently, along with the usual glitter and makeup, he has been painting his face in a way that is grotesque, almost frightening. He is always accompanied to his matches by his valet Miss Linda, who has occasionally been forced to intervene when the Exotic one gets in a particularly tight spot.

"She simply can't stand to see anyone mess up my hair or smudge my makeup," Adrian says.

Exotic Adrian regularly denounces his oppo-



Exotic Adrian Street

nents as rednecks and brutes. However, he's not at all adverse to breaking a few rules inside the ring. Indeed, he's not adverse to breaking all the rules.

All in all, he has done very little to endear himself to wrestling fans.

But fans should not let all the showmanship

obscure a few basic facts about Exotic Adrian Street. The British-born Street has been in wrestling for twenty years. He's earned a variety of British and European championships.

At 220 pounds, he's really quite small for a professional wrestler, yet he has regularly fought the big guys successfully, using his natural skills and all the tricks that he has picked up in twenty years.

If wrestling is part sport and part spectacle, Exotic Adrian Street gives the fans a full measure of both.

WOMEN'S WRESTLING

Women's wrestling has always been sort of a poor relation. Women like Judy Martin, Princess Victoria, Velvet McIntyre, Desiree Peterson, Bonita Thundercloud, Darlin' Debbie Combs and Lady Satan would occasionally appear on local wrestling cards. There were many small-time titles for the women as well. Debbie Combs, daughter of Cora Combs, also a wrestler, was able to pick up quite a number of them. But in the little world of women's wrestling there was really only one champion, the Fabulous Moolah.

A long time ago Moolah appeared briefly in a film called *Elephant Boy*. She began her wrestling career in 1954 and within a very short time she defeated the reigning champ, June Byers.

Moolah held the title until July 1984, a reign of 28 years, unparalleled in the history of sports. Then Moolah was caught up in the major changes



Wendi Richter

that were shaking the wrestling world, and particularly the World Wrestling Federation.

When Captain Lou Albano got into his monumental fight with Cyndi Lauper, Cyndi announced that she would get revenge by managing a woman wrestler. Her choice was former Dallas Cowgirl Wendi Richter. Albano was to be in the Fabulous Moolah's corner.

The well-publicized match between Moolah and Wendi represented one of the first times that women's wrestling became a major part of a big-time wrestling promotion. Although many male stars were on the program, this was the match that everyone was waiting for. The outcome was not too surprising. The younger, stronger woman prevailed over the veteran whose time as champion had perhaps gone on a bit too long.

It wasn't over yet. In wrestling, as in soap operas, stories rarely end. There is always a new twist, a new character, but the drama goes on and on.

Moolah did what many men have done when their active wrestling career is over, or just about over. She became a manager. Her chosen instrument of revenge on Wendi and Cyndi was Lellani Kai, a tough and experienced battler. Moolah got revenge as the crafty Lellani dethroned the new champ. Naturally, that set things up for a rematch, which was part of the March 31, 1985, *Wrestlemania* extravaganza in Madison Square Garden. There was almost as much action outside

the ring as inside as Moolah and Cyndi screamed and threw punches at one another. This time Wendi prevailed and got her belt back. She also successfully defended the belt against yet another challenge from the venerable Moolah herself.

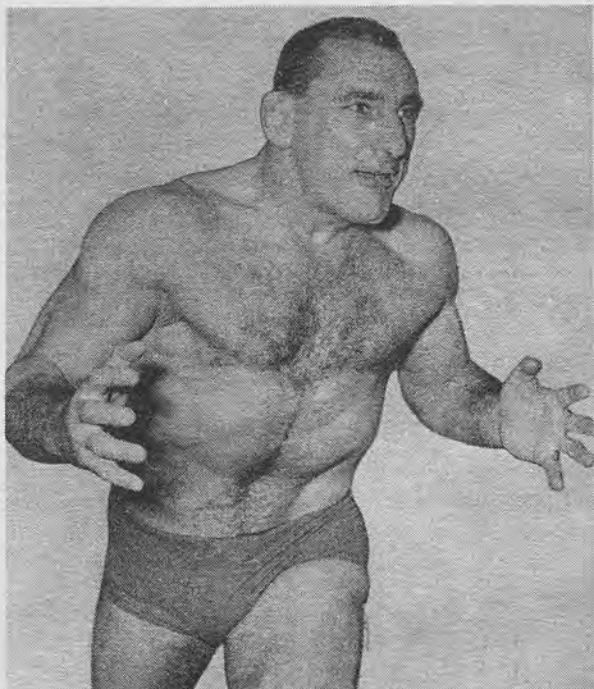
How long will Wendi hold the belt? The new interest in wrestling has begun to attract more and more women to the sport. There is more money to be made. There has also been a general rise in the level of women in all sports, everything from marathon running to pumping iron. Not too long ago most people assumed that a woman couldn't even run a marathon much less run it well. No one feels that way now. Ten years ago bodybuilding for women was considered freakish. Today it is commonplace. So any champ, be she Wendi Richter or someone else, is going to face a lot more and a lot tougher competition in the years to come.

THE LEGENDS

ANTONINO ROCCA

Back in the late '40s and early '50s when pro wrestling was popular on television, everyone had heard of Gorgeous George. His bleached and curled hair and outrageous out-of-the-ring antics amused and infuriated fans. But once Gorgeous George got in the ring you realized that he was just another wrestler in fancy dress.

There was another wrestler of that era who was very nearly as well known, particularly among those who really appreciated wrestling—his name was Antonino “Argentina” Rocca. He didn’t wear fancy robes and didn’t need a valet, but when he got in the ring he was like absolutely no one else. Rocca introduced the high-flying style of wrestling to the United States, and no one has ever done it better. He also popularized barefoot wrestling. Today’s premier high-flyer Jimmy



Antonino Rocca

“Superfly” Snuka considers it an honor to be compared to the great Rocca.

Rocca was born in Italy but moved to Argentina with his family when he was a child. Italians and South Americans claimed him as their own. It was in Argentina that Rocca learned the high-flying style of wrestling and became master of

such moves as the flying drop kick and the flying head scissors. He was wrestling professionally while still a teenager and won his first title when he was only seventeen. Rocca was already a South American and European star before he came to the United States in the late 1940s.

He arrived at the right moment, for wrestling was just beginning to be shown on television. Astonished American fans had never seen anyone like Rocca before; not only was he sensational in the ring, he was an enthusiastic and charismatic figure outside as well. Although his English was poor, his compelling personality came through in every interview. Said one promoter: "Next to Milton Berle, Rocca sold more TV sets than anyone else."

Rocca changed the face of professional wrestling forever. Before he burst on the scene, wrestling was primarily hand-to-hand combat. Suddenly there was Rocca jumping around the ring and off the ropes, flying through the air and winning matches and fans. Others tried to imitate him, and many are still trying. But no one who ever saw Antonino Rocca in action believes that his acrobatic style will ever be equaled, much less surpassed.

By the 1960s, Rocca had started to cut down on his number of matches, and in 1968 he announced his retirement from active wrestling. Actually, Rocca could never stay completely retired. He did some commentary broadcasting on wrestling

shows and even appeared in the ring a few times. In 1976, with long-time partner Miguel Pares, he was able to briefly capture the North American tag-team title.

Rocca died in February 1977. The legacy he left professional wrestling is immeasurable.

LOU THESZ

While Rocca may have been the most popular figure in wrestling during the '40s and '50s, he wasn't the champ. That honor belonged to Lou Thesz, and he dominated like no man before or since. Thesz was National Wrestling Alliance champ for a total of eighteen years.

Thesz was absolutely fearless. He put his belt on the line against every single top professional of the day, and sometimes, though not very often, he lost. But Thesz always came back and he held the title seven times, even though there was often a gap of years between championships.

Lou Thesz loved his sport, and still loves it, for he is still actively involved in wrestling as a referee, commentator and columnist particularly in the Southwest.

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

After Lou Thesz left the scene, there was no dominant figure in pro wrestling until the rise of the great Bruno Sammartino.

The Legends

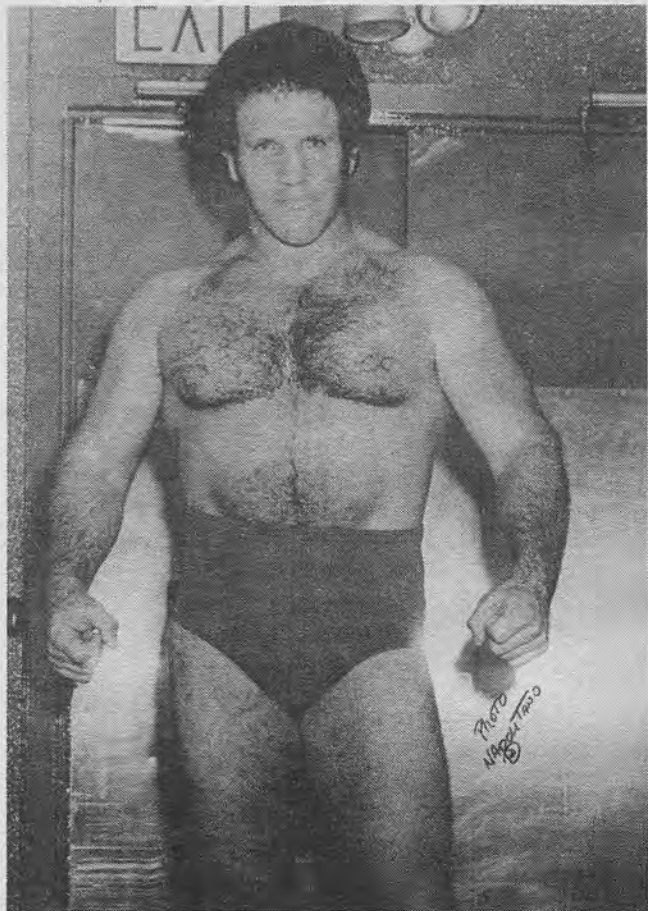
Sammartino began wrestling in the late 1950s, and over the next twenty years he was the man who everyone regarded as the champion. He took his first title from "Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers in May 1963; the match lasted all of 47 seconds. That remains the shortest championship match on record.

After that, Sammartino defeated practically every top wrestler in the business. Compared to today's big men, Sammartino was practically a lightweight. He never weighed more than 268 pounds, and often a good deal less. Yet he could pin men like the gigantic Haystack Calhoon, who weighed nearly twice as much as he did.

With a few minor interruptions, Bruno held the title until April 30, 1977, when he was beaten in a controversial match with "Superstar" Billy Graham. He continued to wrestle, though at a diminished rate, until 1981, when he finally retired.

Well, perhaps he didn't retire completely. Bruno's twenty-five-year-old son David has entered the ranks of pro wrestling. The talented newcomer is working his way up through the ranks like any other novice.

"I didn't want to trade on my father's reputation," says David. And he hasn't. He's been fighting in preliminaries, winning some and taking his lumps in others. Sometimes Bruno shows up at ringside. And on occasion when son David is faced with the antics of a nasty rule breaker,



Bruno Sammartino

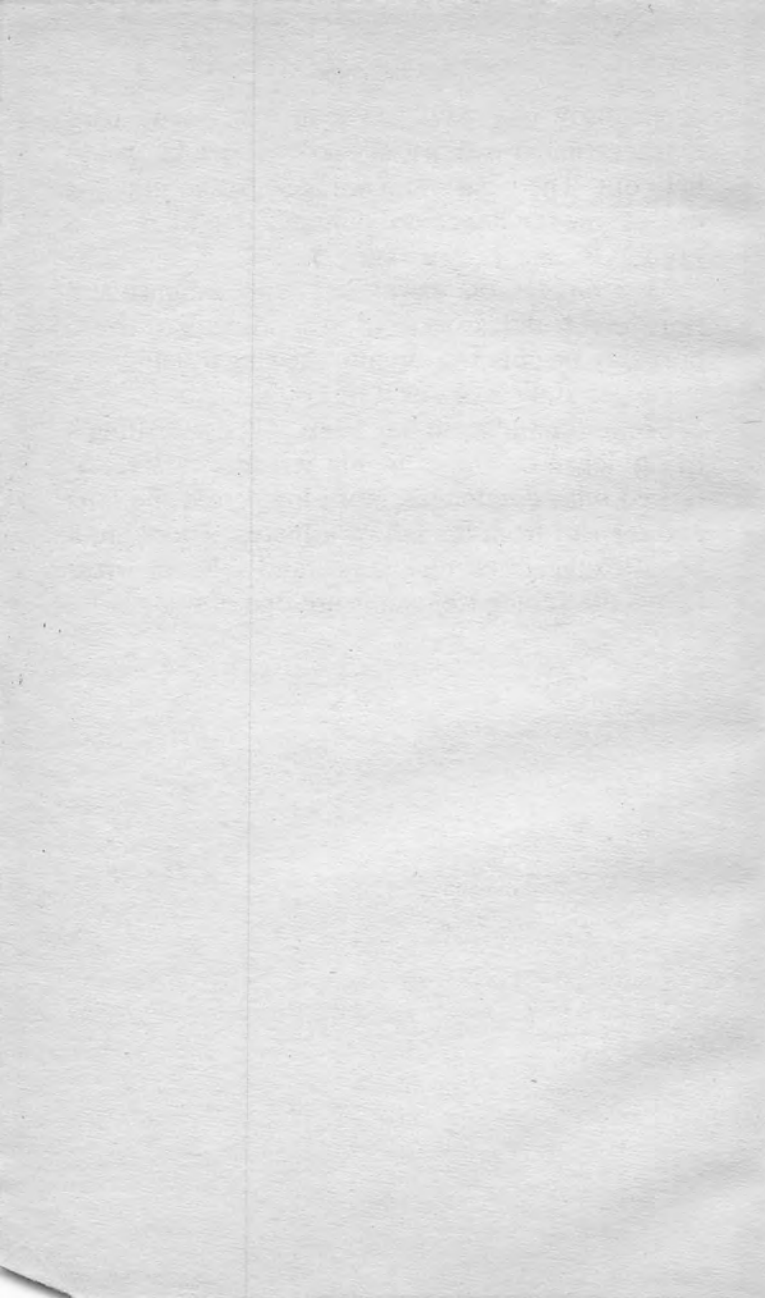
The Legends

particularly one who has a manager who uses extracurricular activity, Bruno has been known to help out. The sight of an enraged Bruno jumping out of the audience to pummel the likes of a Freddy Blassie is awesome.

"My father still works out with weights and runs eight miles a day," David says. "He'd probably be able to step into the ring today."

He certainly looks as if he could.

Bruno Sammartino has been called wrestling's living legend. There is no wrestler active or retired who commands more love from the fans and respect from his fellow athletes. There are a lot of exaggerated nicknames and titles in wrestling—the Living Legend is not one of them.



MORE ABOUT WRESTLING

THE ORGANIZATIONS

As we have said, pro wrestling is primarily a regional operation. But there are three main promotional organizations which control most of the major wrestling bouts. The biggest of them all, and growing bigger every day, is the World Wrestling Federation. The WWF was once primarily an East Coast organization. But in 1982 Vincent McMahon, Jr., took over from his father and started to expand the operation, primarily through the use of cable television. The majority of the cable wrestling shows seen around the country are WWF produced. Hulk Hogan is WWF champ, and most of the best-known wrestlers in the nation are currently signed with McMahon.

The two other major wrestling organizations are the Midwest-based American Wrestling Asso-

ciation (AWA) and the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA), which operates primarily in the South and Southwest. In order to fight the growing power of the WWF, the two other organizations and some independent promoters have combined to form Pro Wrestling USA, which has its own Saturday morning television show. Pro Wrestling USA not only has AWA and NWA stars but has signed such former WWF greats as Bob Backlund and Sergeant Slaughter. The war for the wrestling fan's dollar may become as fierce as anything that has happened inside the ring.

THE MATCHES

The most common and popular are solo matches. Such matches usually have time limits of anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour or more. They end when one man has his shoulders pinned to the mat for three seconds, a man submits or gives up, one or both men are disqualified, one or both men are out of the ring too long or, rarely, when the time limit is reached. A large number of wrestling matches end without a clear-cut victor.

Next in popularity comes the tag-team match. There are two men on each side, but only one from each side is supposed to be in the ring at any given moment. The other stands on the ring apron holding onto a short rope. The partners can change legally if the man outside the ring touches

hands with the man inside the ring without letting go of the rope. A tag-team match generally offers wrestlers a wider scope for mayhem. There are also three- and four-man tag teams, though these are not nearly as popular.

The battle royal pits any number of wrestlers, usually everyone on the card for an evening, against one another. They all climb into the ring and try to throw each other out. The last man standing is declared the winner.

Steel-cage matches are just what they sound like. A cage or enclosure is set up in the ring and the wrestlers fight inside of it. These are considered to be more dangerous than ordinary matches because no one can jump out of the ring and run away. Some wrestlers climb to the top of the cage, which can be as much as fifteen feet high, and jump down on their opponents. Wrestlers also risk injury when they are thrown against the steel mesh that makes up the cage.

Even more primitive are the chain matches. The combatants wear thick collars and are chained or strapped together so that they can never get more than about ten feet apart. Steel-cage matches and chain matches are rarely seen on television.

When feuds get particularly bitter, wrestlers may engage in a loser-leaves-town or loser-leaves-the-state match. The loser agrees to stop wrestling in an area for a specified length of time. However, losers have been known to come back

in disguise. There are also haircut matches where the winner is allowed to butcher the loser's hair. A wrestler considers it a great humiliation to have his hair cut in such a manner. Rarer still are New Jersey street fights, Canadian strap matches and bunkhouse matches. In such matches anything short of automatic weapons can be used.

THE MAGAZINES

The glossiest wrestling magazine is *WWF Magazine*, published by the World Wrestling Federation, P.O. Box 20500, Bergenfield, NJ 07621. The WWF also maintains an Action Line. If you call area code 212, 914 or 516—976-6363 at any time of the day or night, you can hear a recorded message from one of the WWF stars. (We just checked and right now it's Roddy Piper telling you that he's the greatest thing since sliced bread.) However, the call will cost you a small fee plus any long distance charges from your phone to New York.

There are lots of other magazines, but titles change frequently. So, it is best to contact the publishers.

The greatest number of wrestling magazines including *The Wrestler*, *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* and *Inside Wrestling* are published by G. C. London Publishing Corp. (or T.V. Sports), Box 48, Rockville Centre, NY 11571.

More About Wrestling

Other publishers of wrestling magazines are:

Starlog Group
475 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

Lexington Library, Inc.
355 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Modern Day Publications
1115 Broadway
New York, NY 10010

Pumpkin Press
350 Fifth Avenue
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P.O. Box 519
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NOT QUITE HUMAN™

by Seth McEvoy

Meet Chip—he seems like any teenage boy, but he's really a robot! No one at Harbor Valley High suspects his secret, and Chip has to make sure it stays that way. At school, Chip runs into good kids and bad kids, and plenty of situations that defy his perfect android logic. Chip also has to learn to handle the most illogical situation of all—love! Chip will take you on a series of high-tech adventures spiced with mystery, romance and lots of laughs as he tries to get through school without letting anyone discover he's NOT QUITE HUMAN.

#1 BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED

Chip's first days at junior high get off to a bad start. Not even his synchronized sector motors, electrologic memory banks and specialized voice tapes may be able to get him out of this jam! Erin, a really cute girl at school, wants to get just a little too close to Chip. Also, someone has vandalized the cafeteria and stolen the school computer—and Chip is being blamed. Chip has to find the real culprit to prove his innocence and to keep his android identity a secret!

Read on . . .

#2 ALL GEARED UP

Chip replaces the drummer in the school rock band. Nails, the original drummer, then forms his own group, and it's time for a battle of the bands. But Nails has some dirty tricks up his sleeve, and unless Chip can stop him he'll destroy the band—and Chip, too! Not only that, but Erin, Chip's biggest fan, is coming dangerously close to discovering his secret!

#3 A BUG IN THE SYSTEM

Chip has been unfairly accused of computer crimes. Found in the wrong place at the wrong time, he must discover who is stealing money from automatic teller machines and tampering with the school's data banks. As if his dynakinetic logic circuits aren't already busy enough, he must also contend with Erin's schoolgirl crush on him. Chip will have to do some quick de-bugging to keep himself out of the arms of the law, and at the same time keep his secret from being discovered by a very friendly young lady!

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